



F O R C E S 2 0 0 9

2 0 T H A N N I V E R S A R Y



20TH ANNIVERSARY
FORCES

FORCES marks its 20th year of publication with this issue. As always, it includes an array of tastes and sights and sounds and memories from Collin College students. Works range from the memoirs of several of our senior SAIL members to two featured poets: Mike Raffaele, whose work shadows a young Walt Whitman/Allen Ginsberg, and Susan Blick, whose work has a personal yet disciplined quality.

Finally, we are blessed to be supported and backed by a board and president whose vision continues to let Collin County residents have their dreams precede realities while providing a reflective yearly touchstone that actively archives our time and our community. Also, one final trip can be taken through Molly Boyce's 1980[®] poem; it is a veritable journey through world events from the college's beginning to present.

"We didn't start the fire." — *Billy Joel*

R. Scott Yarbrough
Editor of *Forces Literary Journal*

F O R C E S

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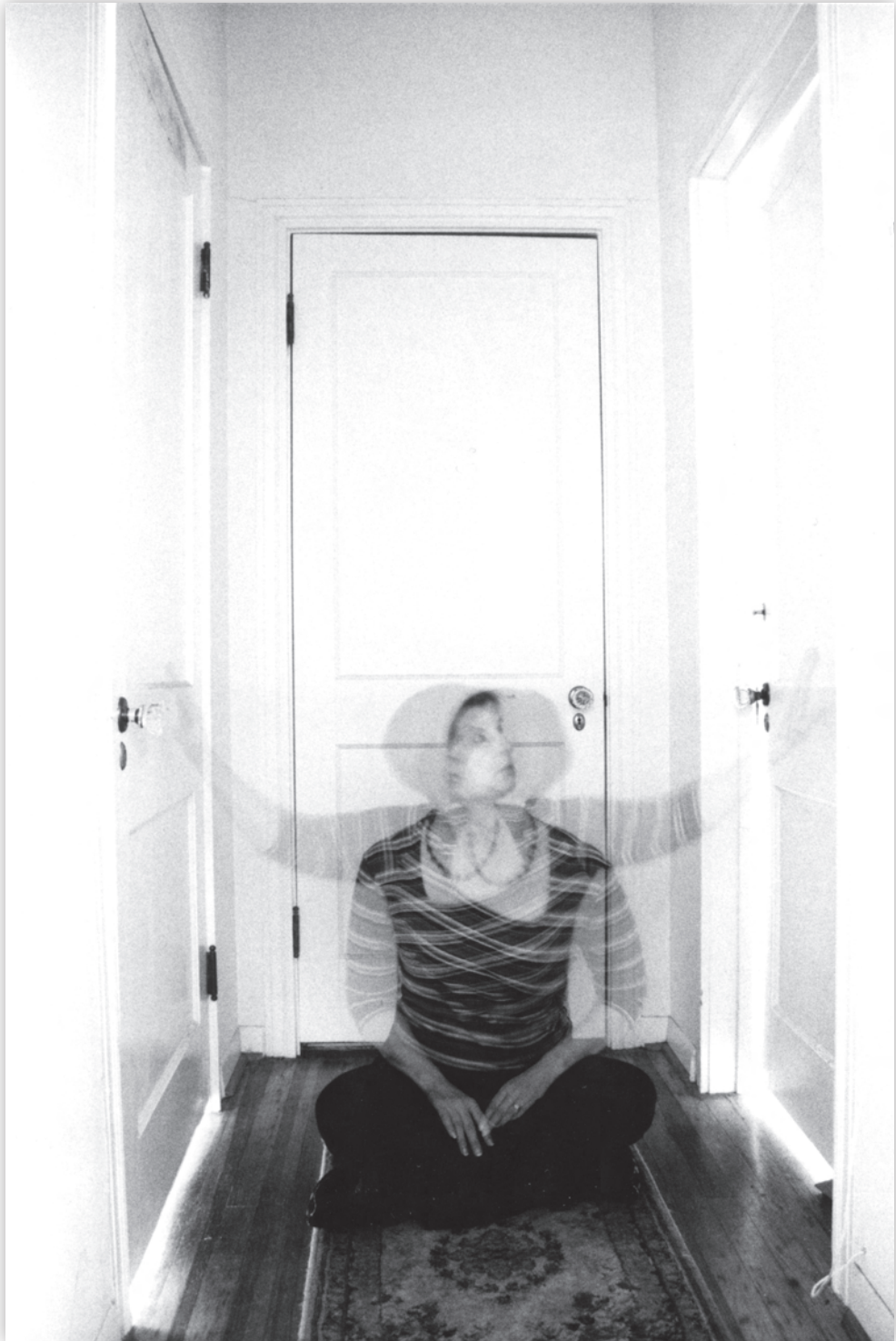




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CHOICES Tracy Dicks

1980[®]

Molly Boyce

word was the world had changed
for the worse everyone speculated
Palestine clashing, preachers confessing
and no one in their right mind
booked Guyana for a vacation

were we on our way to oblivion
when Lockerbie, Scotland shook the world
before it was chic to live in fear,
but no one dares remember that flight
along with 9/11 or Flight 93

maybe it was true this world had gone to pot
doctors claimed it was good medicine after all
cell phones romanced us as we learned to Relax,
easier to lose oneself in Pac Man or Mario
when 'just say no' did not work

what would become of this world gone wild,
hijackings, bombs, arming foreign gorillas,
NASA holding tight a young teacher's hand,
the other Bush wooing us with 'read my lips'
after the man knocked down the wall

might be true we lost our virginity during those years
or gave it up while millions died before they were born,
Black Monday diverted the world with a grim prophecy
stock market crash, money lost, human error to blame,
contaminated waste lining eastern shores

were we so gullible to believe all their lies,
our fault we were not Bueller who escaped for a day,
routing for Molly blossoming in the Breakfast Club,
never recognizing E.T. and his transforming power
allowed Luke to fight galaxies far, far away,

are we better off today for what was left behind,
yellow ribbons, Brook Shields, and "who shot J.R."
do we still mourn at the Dakota, cheer the Laker's win,
or continue to count the number of poison pills
that accidentally killed our "King"

how do you judge progress during this era,
by Madonna or laughter on Saturday Night,
English fairy tales proving they do come true,
those miraculous births of Cabbage Patch Kids,
finally disco died and we all were proud

one thing for sure as we head Back to the Future
Footloose dancing through barns, across car hoods,
moon walking into Thriller, skating rings around Xanadu,
whether a Springfield or Joel musical generation
we all admitted how hard it was being green

what would become of this world gone wild . . .



TREES Donna Gors

SUNLIGHT

Mary Baumgartner

Sunlight fascinates me
It's so warm
It's so bright
It's so majestic
It's so sublime.

Sunlight draws me
With its bright colors
With its effulgent rays
With its warm waves
With its constant presence.

Sunlight guides me
As its light illuminates me
As its brilliance excites me
As its fieriness warms me
As its existence lets me be.

Sunlight blesses me
Its energy heals me
Its beauty inspires me
Its provisions strengthen me
Its presence reasons for living give me.

THANKING THE MUSE

(in homage to "The Confessions of St. Augustine")

Sabrina Mendoza

I dream of a place where we can make love
on conquered heights of once-blank pages
spilled with the ink of moonlight
and white sleep

An ageless old volume
whose leaves curl upon the inward thoughts;
where realms tumble down rolling hills of
mind

"And I will be immovable,
and fixed in Thee, Thy Truth";
Words will flow like music,
and thoughts fill like fine food

Tip-toeing through worlds of knowledge,
picking books like blossomed flowers



ME Mirtha Aertker



JOHNNY LEE Kristi Ashcroft

THE MOCKINGBIRD

Beth Turner Ayers

Necessity brought me here.
I had preconceived notions
Of Texas.
How appropriate, I thought.
The mockingbird perches
In a representative pose
As it mimics, yes mocks,
Inducing false hope
With its imitation of reality,
With unnatural voices.
Prolific, deceptive voices:
The cowboy want-to-be
Cheerleader moms
The voice of the Old South
"Ya'll come back ya' hear,"
If deemed acceptable.
I expected red-neck voices.
The real cowboy is extinct.

But years absorb cynicism
I now marvel at the mockingbird,
Texas bird.
No longer does it mimic.
It whistles the ultimate complement,
The flattery of reproduction.
It sings with its own voice,
Momentarily mistaken for another.
It is genuine; it is unique.
Offering a vast variety.
Preconceived notions evaporate.
How appropriate, I think.
The mockingbird was chosen,
Delegated to high status,
Its unequalled song covers the state
That absorbed the cowboy.
Necessity keeps me here
But I don't mind.

ALL GOOD THINGS

Katie Fitzrandolph

The terracotta plant saucer turned ashtray
on the balcony filled with rain water and created
a butt swimming pool murky with nicotine.
"That's a lot of cigarettes," J said
"You can tell Russ has been here"
But it wasn't just Russ's 27s,
there were the occasional No. 9s
in their hot pink bathing suits
flirting with the new guy Crush's
splashing up reminders of the whirlpool
week, sleepless night early morning
conversations, vices and family secrets,
long eye catches and new kisses.
I took a drag, flicked, listened
to the exciting sizzle and thought
about the moment when the clouds
would suck up the last drop of giddy
moisture and leave a corpse beach
of dried up ordinary old smokes.

it is genuine, it is unique . . .

BRONZE - BLACK BIRD Suzanne Hess



I HAVE CONQUERED THE ANGEL OF BLISS

Jeremy Jemba

If the wind can push a dry seed into a flowing stream,
And pull an aged oak tree of its roots,
If a web could hold water, and a bottom of an old basket never falls out,
If what doesn't grow...doesn't die,
Then love, faith, all hopes and dreams are just as meaningless as the bottomless old basket
The rootless aged oak or a dry seed in a dried stream.

For every minute, you breathe.
You should have a smile tied to the packer makers of my heart.

Your face will glow in the dark.
As you live, the dream of old companions.
Free at last, free from now on!
From darkness and into the light which most frightens you,
the root of all your deepest fears.

Standing in youth and ask yourself?

Who am I not to be gifted,
Not to be gorgeous and talented.
Not to stand among comrades whose heads rest on tradition of honors and values?

Over the shining skies of the Texan Hill Countries,
Dawn has come and the dang of mist falls all around me.
There is a taste of success in my mouth,
A sugar of the sweetest kiss,
Colors of a beautiful spring day.

I have conquered the angel of bliss,
her wings above me packed with love this fall
and perfumed with an ecstasy smell of a Burberry Rose.



READ ME Mirtha Aertker

who am I not to be gifted, not to be gorgeous and talented . . .

**AMERICAN SUPERSTORE
FRONTIER CLEARANCE**

Michael Raffaele
Featured Poet

Tonight I drove through old country towns that looked like my grandfather
Passing away and taking 1906 with him.

I saw.

Cemetery signs that pointed in no direction-
Background to harmony road hitchhikers with thumbs to God under the billboard selling faith
For Catholic superstores with hypnotizing eyes of Jesus on top of Texas-
Heaven's marketing plan spinning in rotation on the pastor talk show late afternoon radio.
The resurrection marked down through Friday.

Garbage bag mile markers over the elk crossings.
Guiding the cities of native gold casinos begging the Midwest plains for a dollar-
Where the white man cometh to put dreams down on good table deals-
The playing card irony thick as hide.

Working man double wide yard sales with no customers.
Liquor stores with no change left.
Old mom and pop vegetable stands bargaining themselves on the sides of New Mexico highways.
Flea market road trailers with owls resting on the stoop hustling the day to a close.
Antique shops in antique towns with antique houses going down with an antique sun.

The day had aged and so had I.

Pine skin mountain men tearing frozen trails for job wary vacationers
Who follow melting eye drops to the summer ocean boardwalk coastal towns waiting for them.

Watching venture capitalist ghosts out my window...

...Native beauty crying at every turn.

And at the starting edge of every town I found the busy superstores
Eating the land away.
Billions served with a billion names unremembered.
Wal Marts in Beijing Wal Mart clearances in Japan-
Wuhan Wal Marts selling China ducks dead and strung-
Out pricing the cuisine once owned by the street corner.
Amish mommies and daddies and their little country children of God



FAIRVIEW WATER TOWER Katherine Robertson

SUNFLOWERS Katherine Robertson



Drawn in by horse and buggy parking spaces right outside the door-
 And coupons of corn meal and butter that need no longer be churned.
 The Lord lost in an advertisement.

Walking past the women's panties and the sporting goods
 And the chicken livers and the beer stocked monuments of manifest destiny.
 Past the watermelon smelling like my grandfather in the field-
 And the sandals I need for a vacation to get away from it all-
 Flying twenty-six hours over oceans and lands of stock pointed neck ties
 To find Wal Marts hugging the beaches at the edges of the earth-
 Tropical coupons and rolling waves of rollbacks swimming all around me.
 Wal Mart bagged skin covering Wal Mart bodies
 With Wal Mart tan lines copyrighted and subject to Wal Mart tax.

Sleeping under the sun in Montego Bay and waking up in Staten Island
 And wondering where the world went.
 The earth made so small by a store so big.

Wal Mart drives turning off Wal Mart streets that meet up at Wal Mart boulevards.
 Moscow Wal Mart Idaho Wal Mart-
 Capitalism and socialism summed and subtracted
 Yielding the difference of a marketing campaign.
 Muslims buying rugs in aisle nine.
 The streets of Korea frightening me until I round the corner and see Wal Mart winking at me-
 Holding all the things I will need when the bombs go off.

Waiting in gigantic lines with my memories processed in thirty minutes-
 Leaving with a receipt that tells the story of my life.
 My world a gigantic superstore panorama.

Greeters old and wrinkled-
 Longing for the days when they welcomed customers with their own doors.

Tonight
 I locked eyes with the land
 and
 Everybody was a dead salesman.

I saw everything dying and dead and being sold off for tomorrow.

I traveled the world and all I saw was home.



LIVESTOCK STATION
 Katherine Robertson



RUNGS Donna Gors

TWO

DOUBLEBENT SNAKES

Greg McClure

two doublebent snakes
slither out from their father's nest
hand raised as if to say
yield before i force you
oh God hold back the skies
chaos rains from the clouds in metal casings
cursing my house with disorder
and i toiled so long in that garden
my son wakes two minutes before dawn
by sun up his room is barren
drowned by the horizon
he leaves somberly
ill news in official envelopes
and my roses are uprooted
my house transforms instantly
and portrays all else
five years i cry fruitlessly
these envelopes come too frequently
because there never is any
they bear no good news

Poland, 1939

A FOREIGNER IN A FOREIGN LAND

Marge Anderson

Feeling the excitement,
Tinged with a little (fear),
Finding my way on Kyushu

Looking for an artist
Sure to sell cheap
Wooden plaques he'd made.

Seen in a little shoe shop
Downtown in Fukuoka
That fed a greedy heart.

Asking strangers,
I curbed my brash
American interrogation.

In my halting use/
Abuse of their language,
Making sure I bowed properly.

"Forgive me, Sir,
Please be so kind
To show me the train...

The station...
The road and the path..."
Until certain of my goal.

The cottage, far from small,
Yet built with natural wood
And thick straw thatch.

"Gomenasai, dozo,"
Softly in a near falsetto,
As is custom for women,

"Konichiwa, Gomenasai."
People never knocked
For that noise was quite rude.

The wooden screen
Slid back,
A maid revealed herself.

Behind her, to my awe,
Was a golden bronze Buddha
Twenty feet high.

I explained I had admired
His carved wooden plaques
In a shop in Fukuoka.

He smiled and bowed, saying,
"The owner is a an old
Friend of mine."

I STAND AT THE DOOR Cinde Rawn



A distinguished old gentleman
Then appeared at the door,
Politely bowed and ushered me in.

He was a world-renowned sculptor,
With much taller Buddhas
In Tokyo, London, and Paris.

My embarrassment was eased
By his great kindness
And tea from his special cup.

I came as a "rich" American,
Looking for inexpensive art;
But left greatly humbled.

Enriched not by art,
But by great kindness—
Far greater than gold.



PICTURES OF VIETNAM
(for Mom and Dad)

Michael Raffaele
Featured Poet

Today my eyes scrolled through photos older than my body
And my mind traveled back three decades an hour.
I put on hundreds of different faces and cried hundreds of different tears
With black and white hands projected out to me through an old war scrapbook.

First I arrived on the Cambodia shore-
With the New Testament strapped to my helmet
And the rifled song of war stringing my back-
Pointing to the clouded sky amped up for the barracks-
Kissing my stripes with the stars of America on my forehead.

Then I found myself crouched fetal position on a tiled De Nang market square-
Attached by the fingertips to my little bui doi brother
Who rested cribbed in an empty bullet box on New Years Eve.

And I played tug of war with men I've never met on a blue beach in Nha Trang-
With huddled tribal children giving my foreign lens the peace sign-
Framed by the camouflage of my soldiered arms-
The hail of my photo lens now interchangeable with the flicker of my gunfire.

The afternoon I slept in the sun under the new remnants of an old Hindu temple-
My head rested on a warm gatling whose firepower I can't even put into words.

I was exposed to a fatigued march through the central province of My Son-
Where I heard my boy cry from his bed laying so many still lives away from me-
While waves and waves across my fathers yawned through protests of peace
As I raised a lively lily to their hollowed barreled eyes and begged them to bring me home.

UNTITLED Ashley Danielle Siebert

And I saw the allergic reaction to freedom-
With deformed baby twins of war born to burn-
Hugging each other with eyes closed to us forever
In the yellowed Ho Chi Minh agent orange water jar.

I felt sweet cooked powder shot into my veins.
And the smells of South Asian love that numbed the final days of my life
As I was ordered to put a gun into many mothers' mouths.

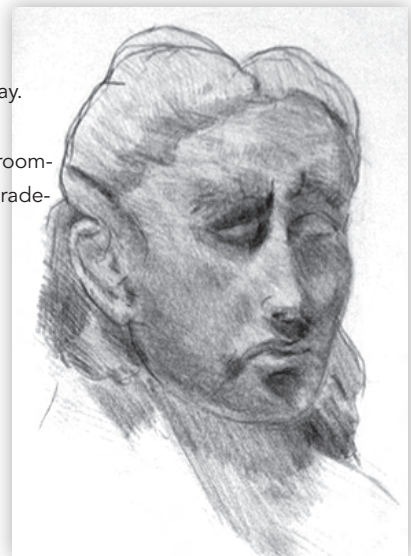
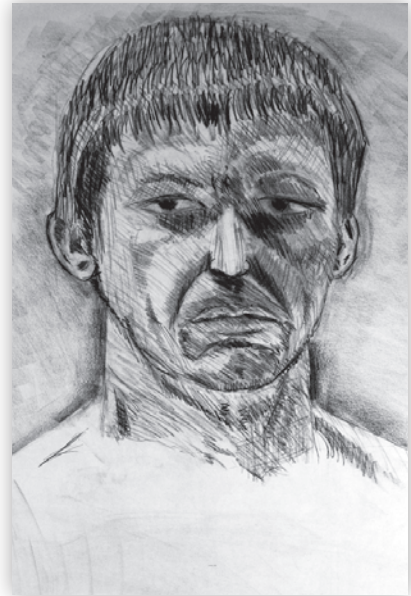
And then my legs treaded Christmas '74 through the Mekong Delta
Under trees I hoped were topped by angels.

The day my aching thinned ribs smiled through my naked Viet Cong skin
As they grabbed sweet air in the smoking Trang Pan village-
My eyes napalm glossed and shuttered shut.

A plaid-shirted Saigon grimacing
As I raised a pistol to its head-
With frantic crowds rushing the embassy rooftop as the last Army bird flew away.

Then after an hour of this endless three millimeters I finally escaped that dark room-
Rolling my redlight paralyzed eyes through an empty sidewalk sterile street parade-
Fleeing the panoramic chaos of Vietnam seven years before I was born-
Having died many deaths and asked many questions
In a part of my history I never understood until now.

DRAWINGS James G. Robinson





CORNBREW AFTERNOON Cinde Rawn

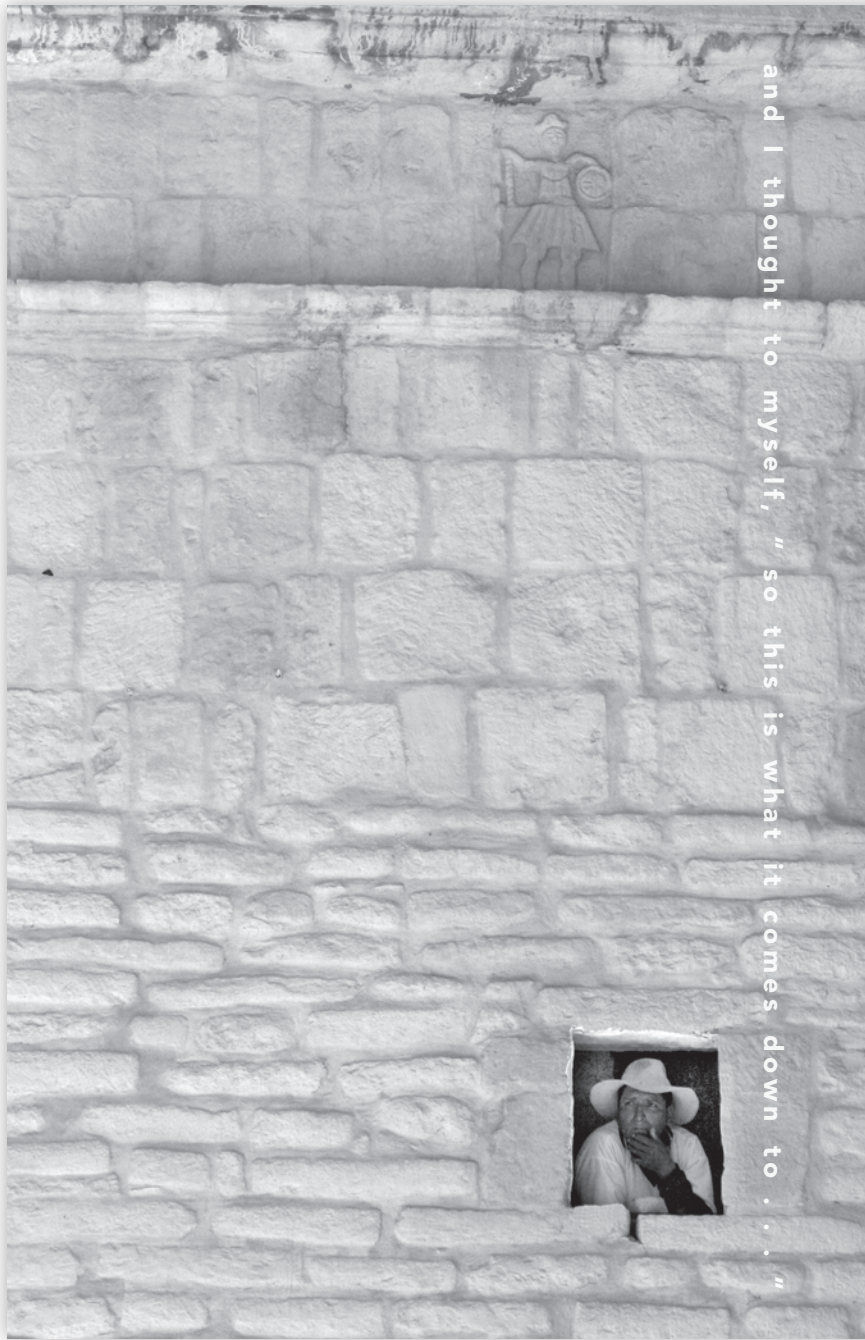
BURYING JOHN'S LEG

Rudy McCallister

"THIS IS HOW IT STARTED. WE WAS SITTIN' HOME on Friday night. I remember it was Friday 'cause the fights was on the TV. And the phone rang. In those days, you didn't get a lot of phone calls like you do now. If somebody called, it was for somethin' important. Somebody had took sick, or died, or somethin'. We used to get calls for all kinds of people back then 'cause we had the only phone in that part of town. Sometimes, you'd get a call from way off somewhere, Chicago or Iowa or somewheres else, and they'd be askin' for somebody in the Torrez or Martinez family or somebody. Well, you just hadta leave 'em there holdin' on the phone while you got in the car and traipsed off to try to find somebody that they needed to talk to. It'd sometimes take twenty minutes to find someone. Course, it was always bad news, else they wouldn't have called long distance like that. Then you had to drive the poor ol' padron or little Mexican gal back home. It was always somethin' that was bad, but that you had to do. Course, today if the phone rings, it's as apt to be a damned insurance salesman or somebody who wants to know if you still live in that house on Elm Street so that he can try to sell you some insurance or siding or somethin'. Last one that called, I told him that I was on Social Security and didn't have no money, and, if I did, I sure as hell wouldn't give it to him and why the hell didn't he get an honest job someplace. It's always been that way. Back when I was farmin', the insurance salesman would drive out to the farm, and if it looked like a good crop, he would try to get you to buy some type of insurance. They'd pressure and try to get you to let them come to our house so they could get your wife and family in on the deal. Then, if you didn't act like you was goin' buy any, they'd try to get you to feel bad on yourself by sayin' you must not care about your poor family cause if you died, there they'd be without nothin'. It just made me sick. Well anyway, the phone rang on Friday night, and it was Sarah. She was cryin' and hollerin' tryin' to tell us about the wreck. John and ol' Will Bass was goin' fishin' and had run head-on into somebody down around Brownwood. It was a bad accident, and both had been hurt purty bad. Will was unconscious, and John had just about had his leg cut off. Blanche comforted her best she could, and we was off toward Brownwood. We had us a thermos full of coffee and was in that '55 Buick. That was the best car we ever had. Never had an ounce of trouble with it. We had to stop three times, twice to let Blanche go to the bathroom, you know how once she got in a car her bladder got full. Then we had to stop in Lamesa 'cause the dangd fan belt broke. I had just taken the car down to the Buick house a week before to have the oil changed and all the belts tightened and all I can figure is the kid that worked there tightened 'em all too tight and the one gave way. You just can't get anybody to do anything for you without him tryin' to get to you in some way. We had that man in here last week to try to fix the dishwasher and a 'course he didn't do it but charged us \$20 anyway. I tried to tell Blanche that it wouldn't do no good to try and hire anybody, but she wouldn't listen. So I just sit back and try not to say anything. It's better that way. It just makes her mad when I try to talk to her and if I offer any advice. She just

blows up and then, well, it just ain't any good. Well, we got to Brownwood in early in the mornin', more like the middle of the night. First, we went to the hospital and woke up Sarah in the waitin' room. When she saw us, and come to, she started to bawlin' again. She told us what she knew. We walked down the hall which was pretty much quiet except for a couple of fat nurses who was gigglin' and smokin' cigarettes. We looked in on John who was all hooked up to tubes and such and we couldn't tell much about it. We left to try to find a room. There weren't no name brand hotels back then so when you went into a town, you were always on your own to try to find a place to sleep that was fit. We drove around the main highway for awhile lookin' for a place and finally found this rooming house that didn't look too bad. We rang the buzzer and finally woke the lady that ran the place. She didn't look to happy to see us and when Blanche asked for a key so that we could look at the room, I thought there was goin' be a fight. But, we stayed the night. You don't know what you're gettin' into when you stay in a hotel. Mostly, they're tolerable, but, you just don't know when you might get into a dirty place where you don't know what kind of people might of been there before. You just don't know whether to use the towels or whether the sheets are clean or what. Well, we slept what we could. Next day, we go back to the hospital. Sarah and the kids was there and the surgeon come in later and tells us that the leg can't be saved. Well, it just tears 'em all up and nobody knows what to do. In those days, they didn't know much about puttin' arms and legs back on a man. Later, a fella, I don't know what he was, somethin' less than a doctor but better than an orderly, comes down and tries to explain how the wooden leg business has gotten better since the war and how he can get around without nobody knowin' he has a wooden leg. Course, everybody starts to bawlin' again and I just have to get up and leave. It just don't do no good to try to explain the truth to people when they're upset. You just might as well drop it until a month later so they can deal with it. When Blanche starts gettin' upset about work or family, you just can't talk to her. If I try to make a suggestion to her, she just cries, or gets up and goes down to the store or calls one of her family up and talks about me. Well, after a while, this nurse comes down to the waitin' room and asks for the family. I'm the only one left so she asks me what we want to do about the limb. I don't know what she's talkin' about at first, but then she asks what we want to do with John's leg. I tell her I don't know and that I'm only a friend of the family. She says that they got to know now 'cause the leg has already been off long enough and if they don't do something with it soon, they're going to have to put it in the incinerator. So, I go and look for Blanche and Sarah but they aren't in the coffee shop. By now, it's around 8:00 in the morning, so I figure they've gone to the hotel to rest. Well, the nurse finds me in the coffee-shop and asks me again what they're supposed to do with the leg. By now, I know it's somethin' that I have to do. You know how I had to take off that poodle we had before Gigi? I told her, "Bring it to me", and after a while, she comes back down with a brown paper bag. I don't want to hold it to tight cause I don't want to feel it. It was a Piggly Wiggly bag, I remember that. And there was a stray Green Stamp hangin' out the top of the bag. I took it outside and opened the turtle of the car and dropped it in. And I was sayin' to myself, "What in the world am I gonna do with this?" I got me a cigar and sat for about thirty minutes and thought about it and finally decided that the only thing was to bury it and that the only place was at the cemetery. So, I drive off and stop at the first gas station and asked the boy there for directions to the cemetery. When I drove up to it, I got out and walked around. The west side wasn't kept up too good and had little markers with names like Washington and Jackson so I figured this was

the colored section and I went back to the car and drove to the other side. I knew it wouldn't be right to bury it inside next to any grave so I drove down a turn-row that was between the graveyard and a cotton field. I took the shovel out of the trunk of the car - I always carried one in case I got stuck at the farm. It used to really make Blanche mad when I drove that new Buick to the farm. One time, I came back home with twelve cottontailed rabbits that I had shot with a twenty-two. I don't know whether she was madder for me bringin' them home in the car or for me thinking she might cook 'em. Well, anyway, I take the shovel out and start diggin' a hole between the turn-row and the rock fence around the cemetery. When you do somethin' like that, you work hard and fast and don't do much thinkin'. But, after a few spadefulls of dirt, my mind did start to wander. I remembered digging graves with my uncle at that little city cemetery north of Lubbock back during the Depression. When I dug graves back then, I didn't think about why I was doing it or about the people who'd be planted there. I didn't know them anyway and when you're young, you don't think about death or dying because it seems so far off. I just thought about the dollar I was makin'. But, when you get to be about fifty, you do start to think about it. And every spade of dirt I turned reminded me of John and a fishin' trip or a domino game or a dirty joke he'd told. And I thought to myself, "So this is what it comes down to. If you're healthy or lucky and live long enough you are rewarded with the sorrowful job of burying your friends and loved ones." And then I thanked the Lord that I had lived that long and had only lost a part of a friend."



LONE MAN Cinde Rawn

STILL RUNNING

David Drane

I hit the ground running
Sixteen and a half years old
When I first touched the streets
It was stunning
For the things I had to do
To put food in my stomach
Never thought I would have to do
But there was no future in my fronting
Now cold concrete is on the meet and greet
That's how it is
When you are looking for a place to sleep
At night under the stars
I couldn't find any peace
Because the M.P.D.
Wanted me off the streets
So I'm thinking
Maybe I should learn to sell junk to fiends
Exploit their weakness
And help crush their dreams
But God gave me a conscience
I couldn't be that mean
Because
Pain recognizes pain
If you know what I mean
Plus I've seen what the junk did to my mama
My adolescent years was full of that drama
Almost wrecked the whole family
But I forgave my mama
So God bless my mama
Now next on the list
Is to get a nine to five
For I rather collect paychecks
Than accumulate jail time
And shame on my father
For he didn't tell me in time
That it would be hell on a young man
From sixteen to twenty-five



SMILES CHANGE THE WORLD

Cinde Rawn

If it wasn't manhood trying to rough me up
It was the ills of society trying to trip me up
I hit the ground running
Sixteen and a half years ago
When I first touched the streets
It was stunning
By the grace of God
I made it off the streets
And I'm still running

IN THE ABSENCE OF EMOTION

Melissa C. Maier

The day couldn't be more beautiful.

Hero among boys.

You are a dream
making a girl a woman.

A mysterious magician
moving moments into memory
for the purpose of masculinity.

Everyone's favorite son.

You are an ordinary evening
astonishingly vivid to recall.

An account of all things average
becoming affluent in popularity.

Respected captain of men.

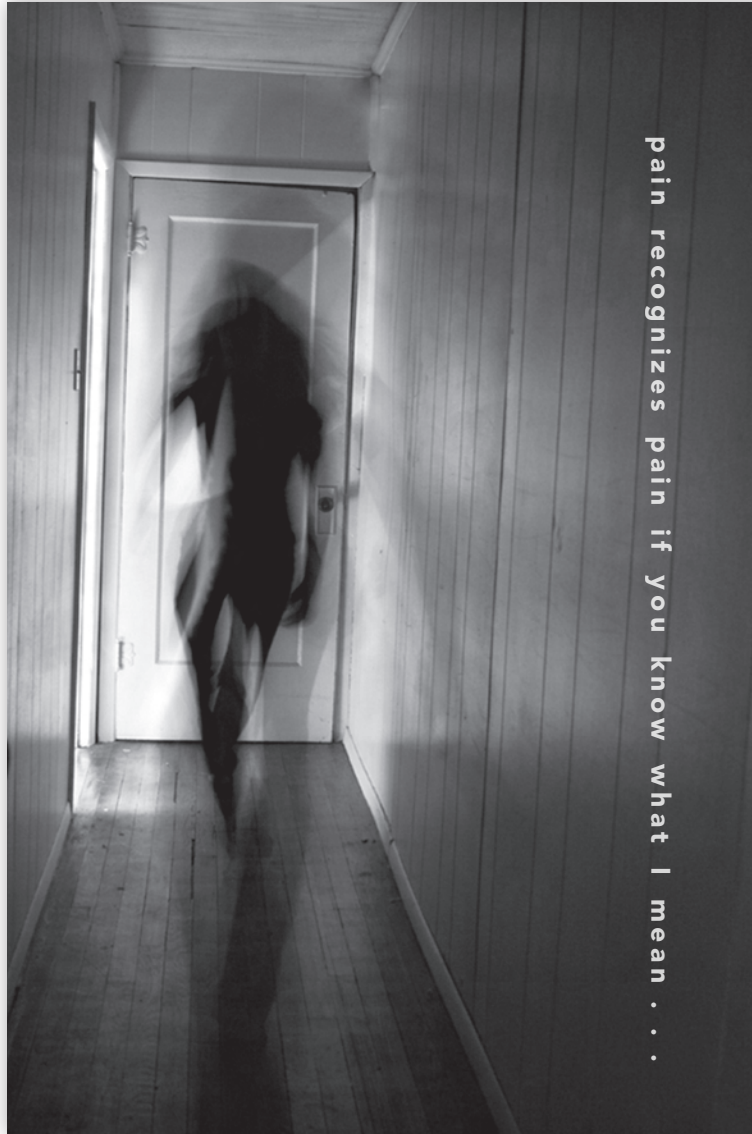
You are that yearbook
everyone wants to sign.

A notable name never neglecting
notions of narcissism.

Pinned down beneath the weight of
your determination, I think about the day.

My life changed, my confidence shattered.
My innocence stolen. Your hot breath bruises my face,
My soul, my body...as does your will.

The day couldn't be more beautiful.
In the absence of emotion.



pain recognizes pain if you know what I mean . . .

GHOST IN MY HEAD

Meredith Morton

SUNDAY MORNIN' PAPER

Bill Cunningham

"Sunday mornin' paper,
Sunday mornin' paper,"
The little boy asked
To the people that passed
Goin' home from the late night club,
The swingers called the city's hub.
They thought it still Saturday night.
Some thought they were a little tight,
When they heard him say,
"Sunday mornin' paper,
Sunday mornin' paper."

There he was, sort of a little tyke,
Startin' out on a Saturday night,
Too young to go into the bar,
He could only peek from afar.
There were all the girls in their twirlin' skirts,
And the dancin' guys in their under shirts.

"Sunday mornin' paper
Sunday mornin' paper,
The little boy asked,
As the people passed.
He thinks, "If they might only could,
Just come on out a feelin' good.
Again they heard him say,
"Sunday mornin' paper,
Sunday mornin' paper."

Well he could have hummed,
"Read what was done,
As you dressed for fun,
But bein' quiet
On that kind of night,
As the rock came to a taper,
All he said was,
"Sunday mornin' paper
Sunday mornin' paper."

To find that every one of them
was written by ourselves.



TOYOTA Cinde Rawn

WORDS ON A PAGE

Susan Blick
Featured Poet

Last summer
I ate lunch every day
with William Stafford.
His voice still echoes through my mind
in reverberating hushed tones.

He spoke to me as if I were a child,
words basic and simple,
conveying the complexity and vastness of humanity,
framing a window in which I could see
the light shining forth from the soul of a man.

As he spoke he held nothing back
and I began to see blood pulsing in his veins,
letters forming angles,
sound softly bending them into curves,
theme creating every crease on his face and upright palms.

Verse after verse he slowly emerged before me
from the inside out, as poets often do.
Long after they are gone, they remain,

these small snapshots in time
creating an alphabetic montage
of the mosaics in a life.

Fragmented and still,
breathing, the heart ever beating
in these words on a page.




GRAPHITE DRAWING Nicole Barnes

THAT AWESOME ROAD WE TAKE Kristi Ashcroft



LITTLE RABBIT

Virginia Davis



OUR FAMILY MOVED FROM OKLAHOMA when I was seven, so most of this writing was about my young preschool memories of the beautiful and bountiful land around the home place.

The trip up Highway 77 from Ardmore to Grandmother's was fun and the scenery was usually interesting. I say, "usually," because many times as I crawled into the black Chevy, I pulled off my shoes and played in the floorboard until we got to Turner Falls. When I felt the car swaying, I climbed back up on the seat because I knew we were climbing the hill above Turner Falls. Looking down through the thick jungle of cedar trees and vines, I caught glimpses of free running water, children swimming, picnic tables, and family tents. I always asked to stop but I don't think we ever did. It seemed Daddy was always in a hurry to be somewhere he wasn't.

A little past Turner Falls we left Highway 77, rolled down the windows, and shifted to a lower gear. Then, daddy turned the car right, onto a reddish dirt road, and we crossed a rickety wooden bridge that creaked as we navigated it. John and I chanted, "Fall bridge, fall." Thank goodness it never did. I was relieved because secretly I always thought it might. Because of the rough, rain-beaten road, Daddy slowed even more. Trees laced with honey suckle and trumpet vines formed a canopy for the road. Streams of light danced through the thick foliage onto the red dirt ahead of us. I loved that ride! Through the thick vines we caught flashes of the Washaita River. We skirted the river for about five miles. We could hear its angry roar. It seemed to want to remind us to stay out of its bed.

As we climbed the last hill, we pulled up to the white picket fence and I pulled on my shoes. Matching cousins, Wanda and Shirley, met us. Sometimes off-aged cousins were also there. We jumped out, greeted the kinfolks and headed up the dirt path toward the rock house. A sea of multicolored Zinnias and red and pink Poppies banked each side of the path. Near the end of the path, we entered a tunnel of orange Trumpet Vines. Bees and darting humming birds ignored us as we ran through the vine-tunnel and on up the steps onto the screened-in front porch. Granddad Brubaker, Uncle Gilbert, and Uncle Guy Crutchfield built the rock house. Uncle Guy was a brick mason and the three of them laid native stones in concrete to give the house shape and warmth.

**ALL HOLES
LEAD TO CHINA**

Beverly Sellers

As a child
I was fascinated
with the idea
if I dug a hole
straight down
A N Y W H E R E
and kept on digging
it would come out
in China.
I took this
as a literal
statement of fact.

So I borrowed
Daddy's shovel
which stood taller
than me and
started digging in
the sandy loam
out there in the pasture
in back of our house.

I dug and dug
for days on end-----
then plum tuckered out
I concluded
the Chinaman in China
could wait to meet me
and I to meet him
until maybe next year
when with luck
I'd grow taller than
Daddy's shovel.

Five or six homemade rockers were lined up along the cedar wall. At the far end of the porch was a handmade table covered in a checkered oilcloth. Benches for ten or twelve adults framed the table. An embroidered dishtowel covered salt, pepper, sugar and syrup in the middle of the table.

Behind the rockers was a pine doorway that led to a large family room. Every piece of homemade wooden furniture faced the ceiling-to-floor rock fireplace. Two doors led from the back of the large room to four bedrooms; across the back of the last two bedrooms was a screened-in sleeping porch. All the beds had goose down pillows and feather mattresses and were covered with homemade quilts. The only picture I remember was "End of the Trail"- at sunset, an old Indian sat on a horse; both with bent heads. The warrior had a club head or spear in his right hand.

To the right of the front room was a large kitchen with a wood-burning cook stove and a corner icebox. The icebox held a large block of ice that stood in a tin pan in the bottom half of the box. The wooden box was lined with tin to hold in the cold air. The top half of the box stored the milk. I do not ever remember opening either the top or bottom half of the icebox. It was forbidden. A cupboard stocked with jars of canned meats, carrots, peas, beans, pickled peaches, and beets stood on the south side. A door to the right led to the before mentioned front porch. Off to the left side of the kitchen was the back screened porch that housed a daisy church, a separator, large crocks that held milk clabber, a drinking water bucket, a dipper, and a tin pan for the men to wash their hands. A wall with an open door on the back section of this porch led to Granddad and Grandmother's sleeping porch.

They slept out there the year around. In the winter and during rainstorms, canvas was unrolled to keep them out of the direct weather. I never remember them sleeping anywhere else. I don't think I ever went into that room, but I looked through the doorless frame every time I went out on the milk porch.

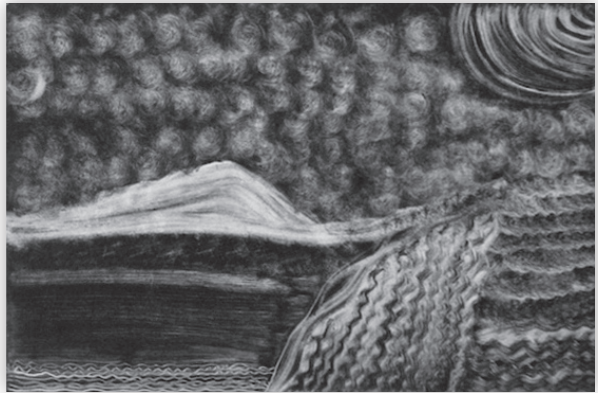
On the right side of the exit screen door from the milk porch was a rain barrel. The rainwater was used on Saturday nights to wash the girls' hair. Up a path, about one hundred yards through bushes and vine, sat the outhouse. Sears Roebuck catalogues served us well. Sometimes corncobs were available.

Straight out the back door was the chicken yard. I always wanted to collect the eggs from the hen house. I was glad I had remembered to put my shoes on as I passed through the chicken wire gate into the inane world of the chickens. They did not seem to like me very much. When I spread corn feed over the pen, they seemed happy enough, but

when I got to the hen house and felt under the hens to get the eggs, they pecked at me and flew in my face. Hawks usually swept the sky above and the roosters kept wary eyes skyward. Maybe they thought I was a hawk. Anyway, I never stayed in the hen house longer than I had to. When I took the eggs to the house, I'd check the drinking bucket. If it were near empty, Shirley and I would take it to the spring. We passed by the smoke house on the left. It was always full of hanging beef and hogs. To the right of the smoke house was the potato cellar. Many times we went down in it just for the smell. It smelled like wet ground after a rain because Grandma, or one of us, turned the potatoes each day. We threw out any soft potatoes and pulled eyes from those trying to grow. After we emerged from the cool dark cellar, we were right at the edge of the ravine. We'd search for a hanging grape vine, then swing down to the bottom of the ravine, put our bucket by the pump, and make as many return swings as we wanted. Strangely enough, I never encountered poison ivy, but I think John did. The well below the pump was deep, and when the ice melted in the ice box, Grandmother brought the butter to the well and lowered it into the cool water on a long string. We pumped the water into the bucket then drank as much as we wanted and splashed as much on each other as we dared and then sloshed our way up the grade and back to the milk porch.

Now, we were free to run across the dirt to the barn. This was a treat. Granddad was always over there, filling the corn bin for the pigs, pitch-forking hay out for the horses and cows, or slopping the pigs. We usually went straight into the hayloft. The sweet smelling hay filled our senses, especially if it were freshly mowed. From the hayloft window, we watched the Washaita River roar by on its way to nowhere. It seemed so angry and in such a hurry. Each spring it flooded the vegetable garden at least twice and always carried brush and tree branches in its red foam. Many years it washed out bridges making it impossible for us to go to church. The garden contained every vegetable I could name, plus a few I couldn't. I remember peach trees, black berry patches, and the pecan grove. The riverbed held rich red silt and the fruits and vegetables tasted fresh and full of acid.

Granddad made his living selling to the Baptist encampment just over the hill behind the spring. He took any leftovers to town on Saturdays to sell at market. All they brought in the grocery store was blocked ice, flour, sugar, coffee and tea, snuff, and kerosene for the



UNTITLED
James G. Robinson

lamps. Sometimes we rode in the back of the pickup, singing and teasing each other. It was grand until Granddad spit snuff out the window and it smacked one of us in the face.

Living off the land was hard and demanding and a constant call to work; however, it was satisfying and the family was very aware of its dependence on nature and on God. The one Christmas I remember was when most of the family was there. Great grandmother Brubaker was a happy little gray-haired lady who loved to cook, sing, and dance. Many times these were combined and she did them all at once. What a wonderful show! She'd twirl around the kitchen - bowl and spoon in hand. I thought that was grand. She sang in German. I didn't have a clue what the tune or words were but had no doubt they were happy ones. Uncle Paul and Aunt Jo lived in Chicago. He was a carpenter and they didn't get to come that year, so he sent every granddaughter a doll. My what a wonderful day that was: the uncles had cut the tree; we popped Granddad's popcorn over the open fire in a metal basket; great Grandmother Brubaker kept singing, dancing, and serving sweets until we had to turn her down. My grandmother was the most patient woman I ever knew. She never raised her voice to us or to Great Grandmother Brubaker. It was a good Christmas.

O'CONNOR 5 James O'Connor



When I was seven, we moved to West Texas. On the trip out, I remember Highway 82 from Guthrie to Dickens - no trees, no vines, no water – just rolling hills and burned grass. Mother cried from the time we drove up on the Caprock until the Crosbyton superintendent called and asked her to teach English. That occurred about two weeks after we moved in. She kept repeating, “J.P. there aren’t any trees.”

After that, our lives were very settled, and happy times set in. Daddy left home each morning at 6:30 and walked to the SCS office carrying a lunch box. John, Mother, Beverly, and I crawled into the black Chevy. First we dropped Beverly at Mr. Finch’s or Mrs. Knapp’s. At noon we came home, and then after school, I ran to the car so Mother and I could pick up Beverly and have supper on the table for John and Daddy who arrived at 5:30 from football practice and work. I don’t ever remember asking one parent if I could go somewhere, getting the wrong answer and then going to the other parent. Somehow, we all knew they were on the same page and the answer would be the same. I felt our family worked well as a team. We knew what our chores were; we did them and enjoyed them. I worked with Daddy in the yard, cooked breakfast for John, Beverly, and I and did the weekly ironing. Ironing provided lots of time for me to listen to Nemo Knapp and Daddy’s discussions on politics or to daydream. I was better at the latter.

Every Sunday, Daddy took us to Sunday school and church; then, mother took us on Sunday night. We were active in the Methodist Youth Foundation, the MYF. As a matter of fact the church provided most of our social life. I loved choir practice under Ann Hamilton, the preacher’s wife.

John was a leader at school and at church. He was kind and wanted everyone to feel a part of what was going on. We assumed he was right on most issues and I guess he was; I never thought he might not be. As president of the student council, he rewrote the constitution. Mostly I cheered him on and spent a great deal of time planning recreation for the youth at the church. As long as I could have fun or be outside, I was happy.

Beverly was a gift to all of us. She was beautiful and good-natured. She loved animals and brought home every stray within a mile of our house. I remember a pet rooster and an assortment of dogs and cats. She was a naturally happy child and brought joy to our home. I thought she was mine; no one ever told me differently. As a matter of fact, I grew up thinking and acting about the way I wanted to. It was a good childhood!

(When the grandchildren were younger, I told them "Little Rabbit" stories that incorporated the home place and my imagination. I thought the other Davis and Hager grandchildren might enjoy this one)

Spring days grew long, so Little Rabbit and Turtle decided they'd sit on the back porch and watch the hawks circle above the hen house. A light breeze lifted the hawks' wings as they glided on the air-stream smoothly, silently. The rise and fall of their wings almost put Little Rabbit and Turtle to sleep.

As they watched the circling birds, the newest chick in the hen house made his first trip out into the chicken yard. He fluttered across a splintered board that held the shed together. It felt good to be free from that old wet egg.

"Free at last!" he whistled to himself.

Then, he waddled off into the flock of chickens. They were pecking at corn kernels that had been spread across the ground by Mama Rabbit. He happily went after a loose kernel only to feel a sharp pain on top of his head. He recognized the feet beside him. They were those of a chick hatched only a few hours before him. That rascal was after the same kernel. Chick flapped his wings and managed to get a little distance between himself and the other chick.

Not wanting any part of the pecking order, Chick spied a kernel off to the edge of the chicken yard. Then, he fluttered and spluttered toward it and away from the flock. As the chick rushed toward the corn, the sharp-eyed hawk caught sight of him. Instinct took hold, and that old Hawk swooped down and passed right over the chickens toward Chick. The familiar swooping sound set the roosters to crowing and the hens to cackling. Soon the air was filled with clouds of dust, cackling hens, and flying feathers.

Chick had reached the chicken wire fence with no place to go. So he hit the ground, buried his face in the loose sand, and shook all the way down to his new tail feathers. Hawk zoomed in closer, and right when Chick thought he was a goner, he heard a loud thud and a weak groan right above him. As the dust cleared, Chick looked up and there was Hawk stuck beak first into the chicken wire. He was knocked cold with his eyes wide open. Hawk's old body went limp and he slowly slipped to the ground in a heap.

Now, you need to know, his troubles were just beginning because Mama Rabbit had heard the ruckus and here she came through the screen door, across the wooden porch, and down the dirt path to the chicken yard. As she passed through the gate she picked up a shovel that leaned against the gatepost. Shovel held high, she pushed open the gate to the chicken yard and headed straight for that poor old hawk. When Mama Rabbit gets mad, she screams unkind things. So as Hawk rose into the air, one of her shovel swings caught Hawk right under his beak and her unkind words scorched Hawk's tender old ears. I think it must have been pure fright that lifted him out of any further injuries from the crazed shovel.

But Mama wasn't through! When Hawk escaped out of swinging range, she pulled back her throwing arm and sent that shovel - javelin-style - straight for Hawk's head. Luckily for him, she was so angry she "missed him by that much" but struck an old pine tree just the other side of the chicken wire. That shovel hit and buried itself deep in the soft wood and quivered for a full minute.

All this sent Mama Rabbit into new verbiage about how those hawks had better leave her chickens alone. Hawk's limped-flighted back into the woods. He was a pitiful sight as he zigzagged to the safety of darkness to lick his wounds.

When Mama Rabbit turned back toward the house there were Little Rabbit and Turtle watching wide-eyed and Little Rabbit said, "'Atta, girl, Mama!"



SHADOWS Donna Gors

MEADOWBANK RD

Michael Raffaele
 Featured Poet

An Elton song
 That reminds me of Grandma's.
 The must of the pullout-
 Maroon checkered.
 Sounds of Jackie Gleason and flashes of the honey moon.

Days of ocean salt.
 Aged pool house with the smell of
 A thousand chlorine tablets
 Rotting in July.

The bubbling porch top
 Hot on the sole.
 Rusted legs and paint chips
 Stripped away by a sound of the Atlantic.

The pier that later fell-
 A perch for the blues-
 The vermin of the sea.

The lighthouse I heard everyday and touched only once-
 Overlooking the stones of the water break-
 Where wealthy men fished and their poor wives wined.

Over the wall the privileged kids of summer
 A world away as I played soccer alone in the yard.

At night-
 Broken bottles in the sand pit.
 Picking up trash of the drunk and affluent-
 Who laughed in the ocean breeze
 As Ben E King sang to me for the first time about
 when the land is dark and the moon is the only "life."

Walking the shoreline of low tide-
 Skipping old tiles of rich houses made rich again.

The spring board where I leapt into the breaks
 And dodged the man-o-war rolling in the storm.

The harbor I loathed-
 Where I was pushed into a school of teething
 bastards.

The rocky point I was told to call home
 For seven years.



BLUE-JEANED KIDS

Anna Gauthier

Just a couple of blue-jeaned kids
layin' skin to skin
in the driver's seat of his car;

her head's on his chest, and
her heart sinks as with each beat
the clock ticks slowly by

How long has this dance gone on,
dear? A love sustained by tears

Five years, my darling, but remember,
as the days shorten, so do the miles
that push our love so far.

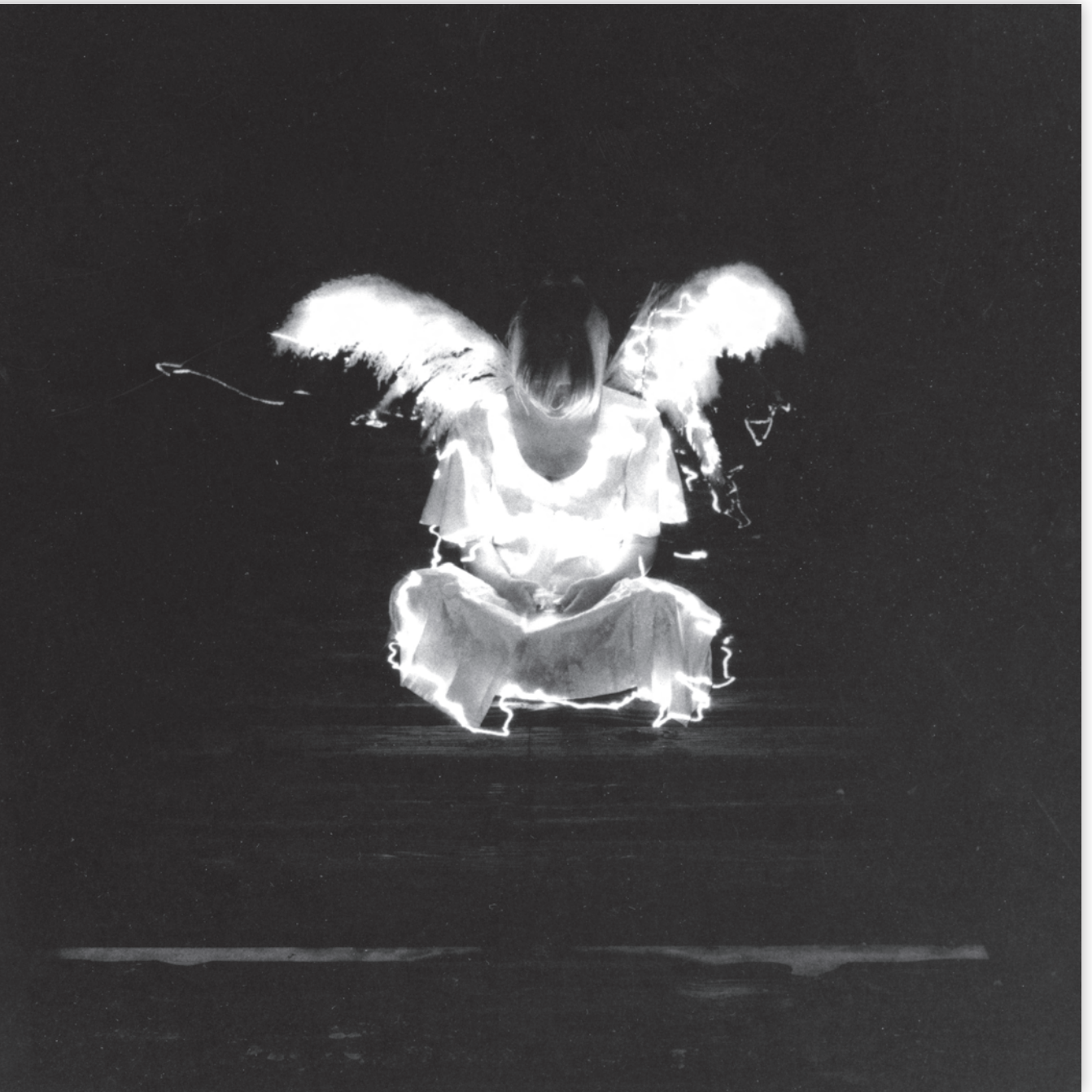
Soon it will be over, with a blink
and we won't have to say goodbye
anymore.

The clock ticks slowly by
and her heart grows as with each beat
their future entwines forever;
her head on his chest.



O'CONNOR 2 James O'Connor

layin' skin to skin in the driver's seat of his car . . .



ETHEREAL ANGEL Jennifer Nail

CHRISTMAS PAST

Doris Yanger

“IS A PICTURE REALLY WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS?” A challenging concept for an artist, and I hoped it really was so, when I created an etching “Christmas Past,” showing the house in Brooklyn where I grew up. As I worked the copper plate, I became aware that it was going to require words to bring life to the generation of American immigrants who lived behind the Victorian façade that I so fondly remembered.

The setting for “Christmas Past” was the holiday season during December 1944, the final winter of World War II. Back then, we were constantly reminded of the hardships and limitations in this time of air raid drills, gas and food rationing. The Gold Star Banners in many windows that told of the sadness of lost warriors in many families. Our two front windows, fortunately, only displayed benign holiday wreaths, taken out of storage, acknowledging and identifying my parent’s belief in the Lutheran version of the season’s festivities, done with a German flair, in memory of the “Old Country.”

Officially, the holiday rituals began with cookie baking, about the second week of December. My mother had the reputation of being the best baker among her small coterie of friends. I helped by extruding the rich butter cookie batter mixture through the shiny old aluminum funnel that came out of the storage pantry each year. Producing a variety of shapes, I then found great enjoyment in decorating them with sprinkles in holiday colors, prior to baking.

Other favorite cookies we made were “Nuß Platzchen” (nut cookies,) made almost exclusively of ground walnuts, sugar and egg whites. These exquisite little culinary delights were the German equivalent of coconut macaroons, and as a child, I thought, much better tasting.

Mom would inspire jealousy among her German friends and relatives for her skill in creating the perfect “Deckle Platzchen”, an anise cookie. It was not one of my favorites, because it was hard, with a crisp smooth cover, formed while baking. The batter required hand stirring for at least an hour, to achieve the appropriate chemistry to form the hard upper shell. Mom’s friend Hedwig would never master them, even though she tried, annually, to her chagrin. Today, stirring a batter for an hour would not pose a problem for any cook, but those were the days before electric mixers were accepted in the kitchens of traditional cooks.

On Saturday Mom and I took a brisk walk from our Italian neighborhood to the Ridgewood area, across Myrtle Avenue into the German section where many of our family friends lived. Uncle Otto promised Mom some baking staples that he was able to secure from the large commercial bakery where he worked. During wartime sugar, butter and a fresh chunk of yeast were valuable treasures in a time of rationing.

officially, the holiday rituals began with cookie baking . . .

That night, air raid sirens shattered the silence, again reminding us that we were a country at war. While Mom and Pop went about the house, quickly pulling down the blackout shades, my brother Rudy donned in his official Junior Air Raid Warden helmet, and armband, grabbed his flashlight, and went out into the night. He was responsible to report any houses not complying with the blackout regulations to his district command post.

A few days before Christmas, Pop and I dressed in warm clothing and old gloves, and walked the five long blocks uphill to Myrtle Avenue, where we selected our fresh tree from a vendor, and together carried it home. This was a wartime hardship, because we really liked driving out to rural Long Island, to purchase a tree from one of the farms, and load it on to the roof of our car. Gasoline was conserved for the troops, and Pop's limited gas ration coupons were unavailable for luxury uses. His auto remained garaged for months at a time.

Decorating the tree was a family effort, with Pop wiring the lights, and Mom placing the fragile imported glass ornaments. Rudy and I would clip on the traditional little wax candles that we would never touch a match to. I received the treasured honor of placing the Nativity Scene under the tree, on the blanket of cotton snow.

Pop and Rudy then completed the "installation of the tracks" for a set of large scale Lionel trains that ran through every room in our "railroad" apartment. I estimate that we had almost 900 feet of track curving, crossing, running under beds, over carpets, around tables and other obstacles, becoming a fascinating obstacle of its own, particularly when it was running full speed ahead, screeching to a halt at a crossing, then running slowly up a hill to the little village under the Christmas tree. There was no "peace" until January 2, when the big production was dismantled, and returned to storage for another year.

Christmas Eve was one of the few times a year we attended church with Mom. We hurried home afterwards eager to see if Santa had remembered to stop at our house, and had left something for us under the tree. Pop had barely finished his Santa duties, and was settling back into his favorite easy chair, puffing on his smelly cigarillo, when we all rushed in. That year I remember my gifts well. From my father I received a huge doll with long blond hair, and she was almost tall enough to be my sister. I was disappointed that I could receive such a "childish" gift at twelve years of age, Pop thought I treasured her too much to touch her, and he never knew my true feelings about Hilda. She was the final doll I ever received, thank goodness. My brother thoughtfully gave me a box of genuine "artists oil colors", packed in a sturdy wooden box. I was very impressed, because he paid for this expensive gift with his own earnings. I have the box, and even a few of the dried out tiny tubes of paint to this day. He was sometimes a good and understanding friend as well as my big brother. I gave him a Parker pen that required saving my baby sitting money for a long time. I bought Mom an electric mixer. Pop received his 5 packs of "Between the Acts", those smelly little cigars the size of cigarettes that would keep him content in his easy chair for weeks. As usual, Mom gifted me with some handsome sweaters from the knitting mill, where she was forelady.

German food has never excited me. I didn't like the big greasy goose we had every year at Christmas. "Kartoffel Kloss", served with the crisp goose was another matter. The huge potato orbs, the size of baseballs, were culinary masterpieces. First she would grate

the raw potatoes, then squeeze the be Jesus out of them in a large press. The fluffy mass would be shaped into big balls, with a crouton in the center, and then dropped into boiling water until they floated to the surface. I delighted in the sliced leftover potato dumplings, fried in lots of butter the next morning for breakfast, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon.

Preparing for our traditional New Year's Eve feast meant a special trip to the Moore Street district of Brooklyn, a predominately Jewish neighborhood. From one of the push cart vendors my mother would select two schmaltz herrings, and have them securely wrapped in newspaper, for our long journey back home on the Wilson Avenue trolley. When we arrived home, Mom would soak the critters in cold milk for a few days, to reduce their saltiness. The final step was to clean them, cut them up into chunks, layered with pickles and sliced onion, and covered with sour cream. In a day or two, by New Year's Eve, they would be well marinated and ready for presentation with hot boiled potatoes.

New Years Eve at our house was really strange, now that I think of it... We performed a "ritual" so unusual, and I wonder if others did so, also? Rather pagan, I thought, even then. It took place late in the evening, and we watched intently as Pop and Rudy would recycle a few damaged or imperfect "lead soldiers" from the vast toy army and melt them down. A little pot, wired to heat lead to a melting point was used. Rather than pour the liquid into the little soldier forms, we watched as the lead was slowly trickled into a pot filled with swirling boiling water, on the gas range. The result was allowed to cool. Odd little abstract squiggles emerged, and from the shapes we tried to predict our future, like a group of fortune tellers.

While we impatiently waited for supper; that special feast of herring in sour cream, we restlessly tossed a ball around the large kitchen. Someone missed the catch and the ball dropped into the tureen filled with herring. Sour cream flew everywhere, beginning our New Year's celebration with a memorable splash! My mother, stoic lady and woman of proper dignity, wanted to begin the New Year in a manner befitting the important occasion. Since none of her fine German Meissen china, taken out of storage for the mini-festival was damaged, she decided the big mess would be seen a positive omen, and joined us all in laughter, as we cleaned up what we could, and saw the New Year in with a bang.

NIGHT OF FIRE
Terry Chen



POEM ABOUT PENNIES

Michael Raffaele

Featured Poet

I'm sitting by a fountain and
All that catches my eye are the pennies at the bottom-
The lonely copper men rusting away in a clean chlorine world-
Dated dreamed faces wavering in institutional waters.

And I want to reach down and grab these men and save them-
Dry them off in my clothes and take them home
And tell them they're going to live again for candy or video games or sissy's girl scout fund.

But I am one of them and I can't save what I am.

I'm rusted and I taste so bitter now-
And I've been taught that pennies are just homeless faces on the sidewalk
That few stop to pick up and shine and have meaning for.
They are no longer dreams but
Fraction faces stacked giving the world all it needs-



PHOTOGRAPHY Katherine Robertson

Only to be left wherever the dead can be left.
And then the others go on with their lives and here I am sobbing-
And I want to look up and tell these people that
Wishing wells are made with the tears of men they toss inside them-
That the heavens of the earth are the oceans that hold up the lands they walk on-
To stop teaching children to wish for themselves at the expense of the little men.
The still faces with no voices born at the bottom of our own static lint pocketed leftovers.

And I look up at this world with the eyes of 1982 and see all the shoppers and students and travelers-
Sitting down on the stairs gracing their fingers smooth and silk over the glass of my grave,

Over to my left is a face of 1951 looking no older than I-
Telling me of the days when he was worth a cigarette and bottle of pop at the general store-
Before he grew old and was forced into corporate hands that gave him away to a son
That threw him in here during a Christmas shopping spree.

Then there's the young faces who tried to buy books the way their fathers used to but came up far short.
And now they have nowhere else to go.
So they lay here and wait for the day when the rushing waters of man will
Eat away their ridged eyes and they no longer have to look up at a passing world
That gave them life and then took away all of its meaning.

Those of us who remember the days when we sat under the arc and had trust in God-
With sweet Liberty standing behind us and our birth year a right of passage leading in front of us-
When we were the ones of many but still were able to sit up tall and squint to a hand reaching out.

And for every big green Washington arrogant face whose value gets posted in every corner of the world
There are ninety-nine of us rusting copper faces holding him up and we're the reason for his glory.
Yet the pennies rot away in the fountains of every mall and school
And corporate square in the mighty dollar's land.

Ones of many dying for the ones of few.

And I walk away from the lit up fancy fountain knowing
I'm just a penny-
Failing to keep my head above water-
Anchored to the bottom of some world by the weight of a memorial on my back-
Wondering why the dollars are all up there
And I'm down here.





NO DIMES TO SPARE Cinde Rawn

**WE ARE
MAYBE NOT PREPARED**

Yvonne Morgenstern

Every stage
is a whole life to lead,
with happiness,
and sorrow,
and problems that fit one's age
and may be solved
or not.
Each year,
even each day,
is a whole life to live.
We renew our cells
but memory
somewhere remains
of what we thought and were.
As what we will become,
we could maybe foresee
if we stopped for a while
our activity
to think and reflect.
Think about what, and how?
There is no one to ask,
no manual to consult.
We may maybe find answers
if we but take some time
from pressure and from talk,
but generally we don't.
So, when the future
knocks at our door,
we are surprised and do not understand
what is we have done wrong,
and why we're not prepared.



TEXTURE SCARS Terry Chen

but memory remains somewhere of what we thought and were . . .

Xx

Susan Blick
Featured Poet

The speaker is speaking
about the scientific study of DNA sequencing.
From ethnographic field observations of ancestral populations spread over
geographic regions they can determine if there are genetic variations that result in
downstream problems.

My mind is wondering and wandering through
I have my mother's eyes
and her toes, her father's ears and when I took them
My father's fingers and freckles
his mother's nose and smile
I am simply tiny parts of parts of people who are all
If I knew I would get high blood pressure
like my mother and my mother's father
or have a heart attack like my father
and my father's father or have an onset
of inherited illness would my hope for my own life become
Could I go on knowing my fate
Would I remain the same or change
Would I be a better person for it
Would I be both happier and healthier
or driven mad like Oedipus and gouge my sockets until
Maybe if I knew when their parts
would overtake my parts
I wouldn't sit and wait for it
Maybe I would live every day like an end
being joyous and unafraid then smiling tell Death that
In all these borrowed parts of parts
is anything really mine
except the acquired scars and the hair
color that covers inherited gray
How do you live life knowing that even at its best it is
and you are roe in the downstream current
The speaker is done speaking. She is asking for questions.

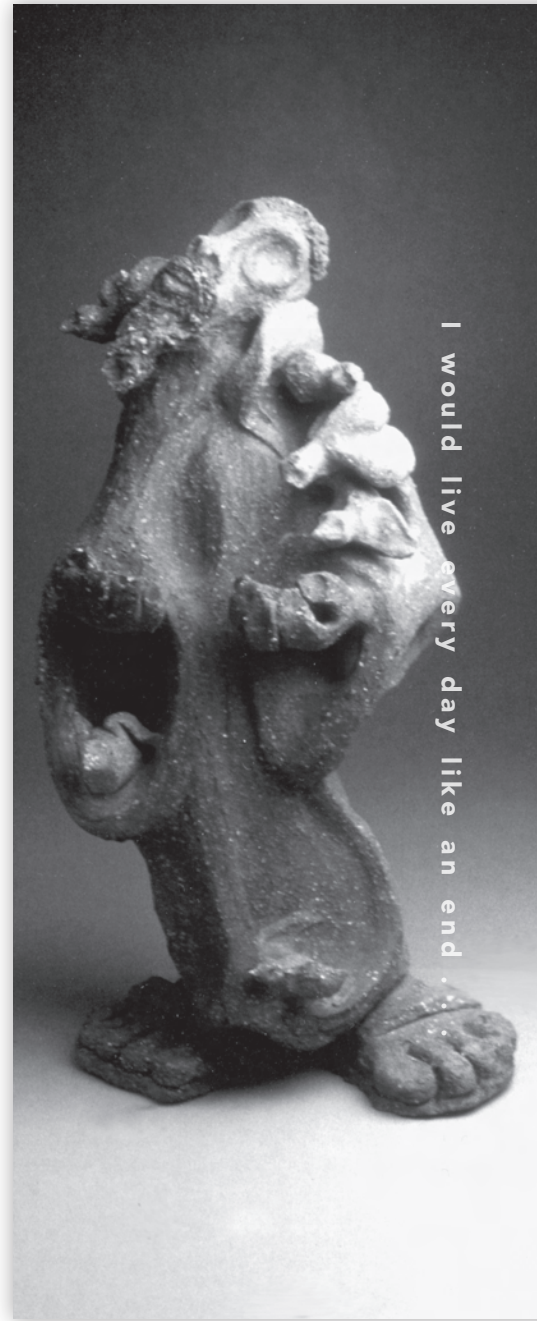
Elizabeth Bishop's "The Fish"
I caught a tremendous fish
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
with tiny white sea-lice,
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
fresh and crisp with blood,
I thought of the coarse white flesh
the big bones and the little bones,
and the pink swim-bladder
I looked into his eyes
I admired his sullen face,
and the mechanism of his jaw,
grim, wet, weaponlike,
and a fine black thread
when it broke and he got away.
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
And I let the fish go.

A MATTER OF FACT

Beth Turner Ayers

She wheeled him in
Parked in front of my chair
And left to register his presence.
"I'm a hundred and two."
No exclamation point.
Matter of fact.
Bright eyes peeking
Beneath the brim of a tweed cap.
No, I thought. I misunderstood.
"There were four boys and two girls
In my family"
He nodded, asserting his truth.
"They're all gone now.
Nobody left but me."
His companion sat down
I smiled the kind of smile
That asked "Is he? Really?"
Her eyes greeted with
I've heard it, and heard it again.
"I'm a hundred and two."
Four boys and two girls
In my family.
They're all gone now.
Nobody left but me.
That's all right.
I just keep on living.
What else can you do?"

He looked straight into my eyes.
His companion took his attention.
"We have some paperwork.
You remember your birthday?"
He spoke. She nodded and wrote.
I did the math.
No, he wasn't a hundred and two.
Raised on a farm
Forty miles from Houston
Looked like New York City
When he finally saw it.
Worked for the railroad
For "a good many years."
Never sick in his life...
Well, he remembers a fever
With chills, as a child. That's all.
But now he can't walk.
"I'm a hundred and two."
He started again.
"No." Corrected the companion.
"You're a hundred and three."
"I'm a hundred and three."
He began again.
A matter of fact.



I would live every day like an end . . .

SAINT FRANCIS Suzanne Hess



BLACK AND WHITE Cinde Rawn

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

Susan Blick

Featured Poet

The first thing I heard
when I walked in your house
was the echo of nothing at all

In the kitchen old wallpaper
still held little daisies
bouquets waiting for you

I opened the window
The breeze freshened the air
The discolored lace curtains waved

I thought of Neil Armstrong on the moon
and how I practiced his bouncy walk
on the terrace below this window
your face framed in lace

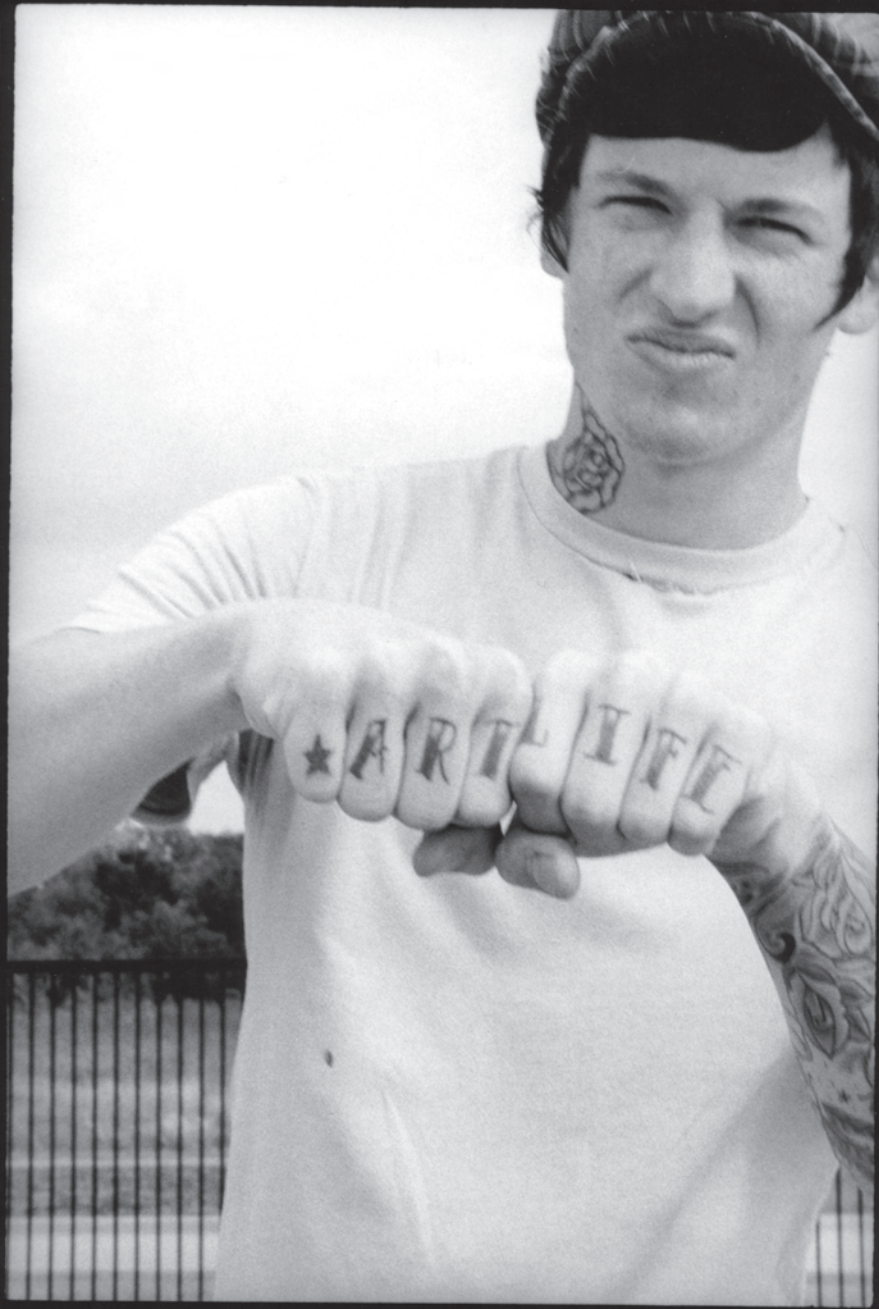
Down the hall your bed always unmade
needlepoint pillows piled to one side
Big Ben on the nightstand ticking away
and in a dark corner your rocker still

I turn on the radio
to catch an inning
I sit rocking forward
in your chair

Everyone tells me I should sell this place
They think because it's empty now
there's nothing left in here

because it's empty now there's nothing left in here . . .

ART LIFE Ashley Sanders



TATTOO

Angela Klewicki

IT WAS A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER in my new life here in the United States. Like many times before, I was awakened by Bruno, who slapped me in the face. After that rude awakening I got up, put on a jacket, leashed Bruno and Scrubbie, our dogs, and took them to the backyard. When I came back inside I realized that I had all the appropriate clothes from the waist up; however, from my waist down I was only wearing underwear. After noticing, I thought, "No wonder I was a little bit cold." I felt embarrassed and I hope that there were no witnesses. Then, I said to myself, "After all, I did not do it on purpose. It just happened." I laughed and thought, "After all, life is beautiful." Yes, it was. I was a newlywed, living in a new country with my very first job. However, that day all my happiness would be rapidly change to sadness.

I was getting a cup of coffee while listening to the TV news. I went to see the TV screen and immediately I heard the news anchor saying to pay attention to the images because it was not a movie trailer but a real event. I saw an airplane stuck inside a building with a lot of smoke coming out of it. Suddenly, a second airplane crashed into the building next to the first one. They were the twin towers and it was September 11th 2001. I felt surrounded by complete silence and TV images. Then, I heard myself saying "not again," and all the terror and anxiety came back to me one more time. I remembered and felt my past again. On that day, I suffered a series of flashbacks from my life in Peru. Peru, located in the pacific coast of South America, is a country that has struggled with terrorism for almost two decades. There were two main terrorist groups: Shining Path and The Revolutionary Movement of Tupac Amaru **MRTA**. In addition to these two groups was the government with military groups that in some cases operated as death squads. Therefore, growing up in that era was difficult; furthermore, remembering was even harder.

That day in September I was home alone. Dave, my husband, was on jury duty. I tried to reach him but his cell phone was turned off. He had no clue of what was happening. He called me later and asked me not to go to work and to stay at home until he arrived. By the time Dave arrived home, his car was full of groceries, canned soups, crackers and many other non-perishable supplies. I was reminded of the time, back in Peru, when my siblings and I had to form lines from 6 a.m. until 8 or 9 am, when the mobile stores, "subsidized" by the government, opened their doors. We were only allowed to buy one Kg. of sugar, rice, eggs, beans, oats, salt and two bags of powdered milk. This purchase was only allowed one per family. However, my family as any other

family cheated the system. My four siblings and I formed the line and denied being related when we were asked. That was the only way to get access to the supplies, even though we were paying for it. Dave also brought many jugs of water and again, I was reminded of the time when my family and I had to collect water in containers, pots, and anything we could because during daylight we didn't have any; water to cook, to wash, to clean ourselves, or to flush the toilet. Sometimes we had to ration it because water could be unavailable for days. Dave also brought batteries and charcoal, and one more time I was reminded of the candles and oil for the lamps that was a must for us in order to illuminate our house. As well as water, we didn't have electricity for days. Not only that, on Christmas Eve, for many years, Shining Path "celebrated" with the population by blowing up strategic power pylons leaving the whole city in darkness.

During that evening, I called my family in Peru and told my mother what was happening here. She told me that they knew because they were watching it on TV. Her voice was tense and I knew she was worried about me. She told me that they were



TRADITIONS Cinde Rawn

watching people jumping from the towers and another flashback came to me. The images of mass graves, frequently discovered somewhere in the Peruvian country side. As Peruvian TV does not edit images, Peruvians were able to see the discovery of many mass graves and subsequently the recovery of mutilated bodies and the horror of their deaths. We also, were able to hear the accounts of the few survivors, which in most cases were children. I started to cry for both events-my past and my present. All those memories were too much at that moment. I also knew that my mother, with the rest of my family back there, was having the same flashbacks that I had.

That night I talk to my husband and I recounted what I lived and experienced in Peru. Then, I noticed that I had never spoken about these things with anybody, not even with my own family. I realized that everybody in Peru, or at least the people I know, avoids this issue. Perhaps, it is too painful to even mention it. That night I cried for all those memories because I never did before. Perhaps because I was so busy, immediately I reached eighteen years old I got a job, and worked, never allowing myself to cry. I remember and felt again how a shotgun really sounds, how the ground trembles a little bit when a tank rides on the streets, how a teargas bomb affects your body. Most important, the sound and the impact from the car bombs not only on your body but in your soul. Those were the memories brought to me that September 11th.

On that date I understood that experiences become memories that are similar to tattoos. Once it is in your body it never disappears, it is in you, between your skin and your mind. Sometimes hidden and sometimes incredibly present. I have many tattoos on me but three are the most important. First, kissing my mother's forehead every time I left home because I didn't know if I was coming back. Second, my mother's toast on Christmas and New Years Eve she said, "One more year that we are all together." Third, always present in my mind this native child who didn't speak Spanish, only dialect. This child, at four years of age, was able to describe the massacre in which his parents with the rest of the village population were killed. I always wonder what had happened to him. I just found out that The *Peruvian* Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) declared, "Its final tally of victims for the period was 69,280 dead and 43,042 orphans." This is the official result, I am not sure if this number includes the ones that remain missing.

Today, everything seems in peace. I believe that my past and I live in perfect harmony. I am able to remember and talk about without crying too much. I know that what my family and I experienced was bad; however, we considered ourselves lucky (or should I say blessed) because I did not lose anybody during all those years. Because of what happened on September 11th and the feelings and memories that came to me on that day, I try to live one day at a time. Once in a while I get sad for everything that happened in Peru and I always hope that it never happens again. I will not say that I am a better person; real life is not a fairy tale; I just try to be the best I can. That is why, I believe that sometimes something good comes out from something bad. I will finish by saying that I learned to feel compassion and I understand the world in a better way. And although I'm covered with many tatoos, I really believe that after all Yes! Life is beautiful.



PLAYGROUND 03 Terry Chen

SPECIES

Susan Blick
Featured Poet

On a drizzly day down at the shore
he waits
his head held proud and green

He is quacking, quacking
and listening for an answer
to come from a single pair
of orange feet attached to
a plain brown feathered body
that holds a bill like his

When he calls he angles his head
on a graceful neck
looking to the sky

He is longing, longing
to see her swoop down
on outstretched wings
to nuzzle close to her feathered
breast as if he could never find
comfort in another
and I think I miss you

DAVID (for lost friends)

Michael Raffaele
Featured Poet

I dream of frozen headstones
And wake up in guilt guided mornings.
Walking to work haunted by birds chirping
Like Virginia Beach piers where we fished with arms around each other-
And laughed under skies draped dusky by the eyes your mother and sister shared.

Then all day long I think about a son's piano playing dreamy keys
In the downstairs peppered porch sunlight.
And "Tears in Heaven" spinning upstairs on a bedroom bed shelf.

And I relive the days when we played hide and seek.
When you snuck away into the woods with powders and liquors
And I stopped looking until I heard the news six years later.

I'm left with arms that are question marks.

David why the drugs?
Why the death?
Why the father losing his faith?
Why pictures with no baby brother?
Why the sister who found you in the house?
Why the Wonder Years reruns now making our mothers cry?

Why me, so old since you died so young-
Why no answers to questions of why?



It's been a long January, David and sadness doesn't melt like snow
But freezes-
Like streams where boyhood friends chase frogs in June.
And rusty backyard swing sets iced over motionless.

Winter won't go away.

And whenever it does you still won't be off to school in the morning.
In May you won't be a year older.
I won't be meeting you at the exit 8 cafe
My daddy won't be taking us fishing down by the bridge
And you won't be falling into the water.

Instead I'll be writing poems to myself with childhood ghosts named David
Talking to me about heavens I know don't exist.
With sisters telling me we'll all see each other again one day-
And I'll listen politely and bow my head and pray blind for the dead-
Knowing tomorrow when I wake up all that's really left is
My lonely planet-
With holes and overdue bills
And dirt roads leading to dollars down in the city-
To painful Mondays dragging into Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Thursdays-
To days so long and years so short.

Walks in the park will be for weddings and funerals and goodbyes of all kinds.
Easter just another tired morning.
Summer camp a day at work.
Chalk on the sunny September sidewalk replaced by cigarettes drawing in cancer.
Sleepovers in hospitals.
Everything we were just the speed of childhood-
Grown up and grown lost-
Gone like faded friends hanging drugged and dead in the closet.

There will be no more Virginia skies and fishing piers laughing with me in summertime.
Like the lonely sunset of New Years eve
Nobody watched the past as it went away-
Including me-
With cheap wine and marijuana and guilt on a mugged Saturday night alone and broke-
My wrinkling skin sandy and pale like dunes holding back waves of salt and time.

I guess I'm just sorry I let you slip away.



DEATH OF A VALENTINE

(for the victims of the Northern Illinois University shootings, Valentine's Day, 2008)

Michael Raffaele

Featured Poet

Schoolboy shots delivered like a love crush memo gram.
Lonely sounds of loneliness clicking away the hours when roses ruled the world.
My death triggered by a morning when men arose with their hearts bouqueted in their hands.

Pedal painted lips dried to the floor-
Dead kissing a breathless pale rose-
The dying valentine of a dying valentine.

Pulped nectared fingers that tremble so loud-
Twitching sub rosa-
Under the roses-
Clutching love notes that clutch love secrets.
A sky that darkens at five after three-
Four o' clock flowers you are too late for the
Self-seeding black lily spreading fast in the vineyard-
Unchecked by old mother.
Rows of desperations roses
Throwing themselves to the moist orchard bed-
Dodging the poppy seeds gardened upon then.

Another morning that ends with men loading their hearts into their hands.

Heart strong shapely rose-
Dying a weak thinned dandelion death.
Bloody pedals blown away by a merciless schoolchild breeze.
Stems strewn throughout the back yard-
Forgotten tomorrow when the year's day of love wisps into yesterday.
Cole Hall an atrium of rage on this day of Illinois love-
Filled with gashed snipped roses-
Shriveled so far from a love-sick Rome that wipes its crying eyes
With the gurney-tissued robes of the martyred saints of St Valentine.

Persecuted beautiful free rose-
Claiming to all that love is real-
Thorned to an iced white cross-
Black holes chambered into my sensitive flowered hands-
Through my drying passifloras that now have nowhere to run.

ANGEL FACE Cinde Rawn



MOTHERS Donna Gors



Chief of the Angels scribed in red from my own wounded pedals-
Telling the sinful city streets where I stood when their world was in trouble.
I thirst in frozen water-
Me a gentle rose winded with the chilled smell of this endless February tundra.

And the sun then rises again.
Agonized and tired. Faith frozen.
Scared of what it will bring to the world today-
With leftover love roses below-
Roaming the halls timid with their slowing heart-shaped steps-
Mourning their love brothers buried in a field of poppies that live for death-
Broken by another mass of life swept off its feet on Valentine's.
A day of love never ends a day of love.
And now my love is gone.

Loneliness clicking away the hours when roses ruled the world . . .

FAMILY REUNION

Sydney Portilla-Diggs

we came together like pastel ribbons
rippling from paths that had touched
one that had not
the jolly, the poet, the hunter, the beauty, and me
our appearances betrayed the connection
that our blood could ne'er deny
we were still strangers
we forged a bond with laughter and barbecue
the laughter masked my tears
my tears exposed my longing and my fears
old folks keeping secrets...
but blood bonds cannot be broken by those words
so robust hugs gave way
to gentle embraces
tentative touches melted stoic faces
tender kisses and pockets of quiet conversation
in the midst of a room
full of love and vigorous laughter
we left like brightly colored ribbons
rippling in all directions
full of promise and
the assurance to meet again



MY HOUSE Mirtha Aertker

GREENHOUSE

Anna Gauthier

Beside a small home
stands a greenhouse:
suffocating in summertime
& tepid in winter,
it is nevertheless
Loved.

It fools the weather
to protect its seedlings inside
(it's those small things
that count),
looking on as ants
steal food from the potted soil
& the plants look out
beyond their terra cotta beds
green with envy.

The freedom they see has
room to stretch their roots,
and inhale sunlight through
waves of fields of green.
A world unto itself, this
hothouse
who sighs with the wind
and laughs at the rain
as the foliage inside blooms
endlessly.

Incandescent light streams
through translucent walls
where
herbs, fruit and flowers bloom,
forever sprout
in this little piece of paradise
encased in glass.

LETTING GO

Christine Hagen

THERE WE WERE; SITTING IN A ROOM in the basement of a church, staring at a picture of him. We all know why we are here. It's as if our existing in this moment made up for all the moments he's already missed. But I know that's not it. A circular formation of souls, crowded around, staring at a clergymen I'm sure the deceased barely knew, if at all. The faces of those souls in observance are blank, pained, hurt, or guilty, as if someone could've stopped his selfishness or hurt getting the best of him. I'm not sure that's the case. But I think I could have.

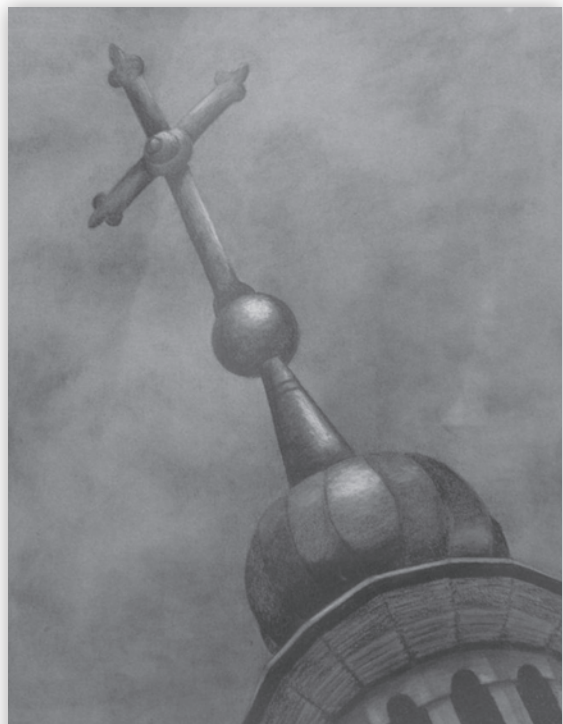
This man is saying words, but I am not hearing them. My family is not hearing them; his family is not hearing them. They do not exist because he is not dead. He is not dead to me, anyway. His picture is his only representation in this cold, damp shell of a room. Maybe it's not his only representation, for there sits his piano, guitar, and autograph book. I hated that guitar but I would die tonight if I would get a chance to seem him play.

The hushed tones of tear-strained voices muttered to themselves the words of Lennon & McCartney, his favorite. "Let It Be" was the simple motto for which he lived. If only he had done so. His parents are there. They don't look sad, per se, but bewildered. As if this is for a show, as if he will come around and say "Mom, Dad, you've been Punk'd!" But that would never be. He didn't like that show anyway because he said it was unfair.

UNTITLED Macy Freeman

And as we light these candles that looked like they were used at the first Passover, I look at his picture. Everything, with the soft candlelight and the music and the tears, falls on me so hard, knocking every emotion out of my being. I can't help it. We're instructed to go outside to release one hundred silver balloons. Silver was his favorite color. I loved him for loving a color so much he named his dog after it.

We are walking into the dark, black night, into a garden where church ladies have their tea and chat about azaleas and their husbands' dentures. I remember when I saw him here, playing his guitar after church one day. That's when I fell in love with him.



After a prayer, asking that God would let these balloons into Heaven, where I think they would stand out as tacky, we are informed to release them whenever we feel the time is right. I cannot feel this time being right. It's not right. He is gone and he should be here with me releasing this balloon for us, not for his death. We were, we are alive, but we can only be alive together, right?

My dad has his hand on the small of my back, and I realize how hot it is outside. My dress is sticking to me. It could be sweat, but it could just be my tears drowning me slowly. He is informing with this small gesture to let go, but I don't think I can. It's so final. As if this balloon is him, and everything he ever did and would represent in my future. I can see in my dad's face that there will be other boys, that they will love me as much as he did. But I can't believe him. Not with this balloon in my hand.

But I think about it. He always wanted me happy and said I was beautiful when I smiled, even in a corny school picture. He wanted me to smile no matter what, that God wanted me to smile, too, because He made my teeth perfectly and they deserved to be shown off. I always laughed. God, how he could make me laugh.

Laughing is the farthest thing from my mind as I face the reality of being one of two people left with balloons. His mother is still holding on. I know, Deborah, I know. We cannot let go because we loved him most. She looks at me with tears in her eyes, makeup falling off of her sunken face. Her frame is startled and violated, as is mine.

I look at her and I smile the best smile I could because I know he would have loved it. I nod at her, saying its okay because he knew we loved him. I nod because I know I could've stopped him, but I nod also because I didn't know how bad he was hurting. I nod because he was everything to me and everything is now nothing and I don't know what to say or do anymore. I nod because I want to let this balloon melt into my hand as I coddle it throughout the night.



With one decision, I look at Deborah, and she is looking at me, and we decide to let go together. She is letting go of twenty-two years of memories, good and bad, and letting them float through the star-filled sky. I know he would like that. We often went to the astronomy lab to look at the stars.

My hand is loosening the party string and I feel his going away. She looks at me as she releases her grip and I nod again, and she smiles. We both point our heads to the sky, with our families and loved ones behind us, as we send a gift to the most beautiful man in our lives. I send it to him in hopes he will remember me. I've heard in Heaven, it won't matter if you're married or not because you have a different purpose. But just for tonight, I need him to remember me. Just for tonight.

CONTEMPLATING Tracy Dicks

MALAISE

Lauren Smart

Balanced between cold and then hot
Is some unknown substance
That claims it's own spot.

Rarely declaring, complaining, or swearing
Muttering mumblings while
I go on caring.

It devours my joy, tearing
My angers in half
As if in defense of a word or a riddle.

It nearly moves forward
Then takes a step back
Like a friend who comes over
And then takes a nap.

I mean nothing rude
But perhaps a change of tune
Or be gone little demon.

I won't miss one bit
Your lukewarm encouragement
But when passion again expires my time
I'll call you dear friend, I'll drop you a line.

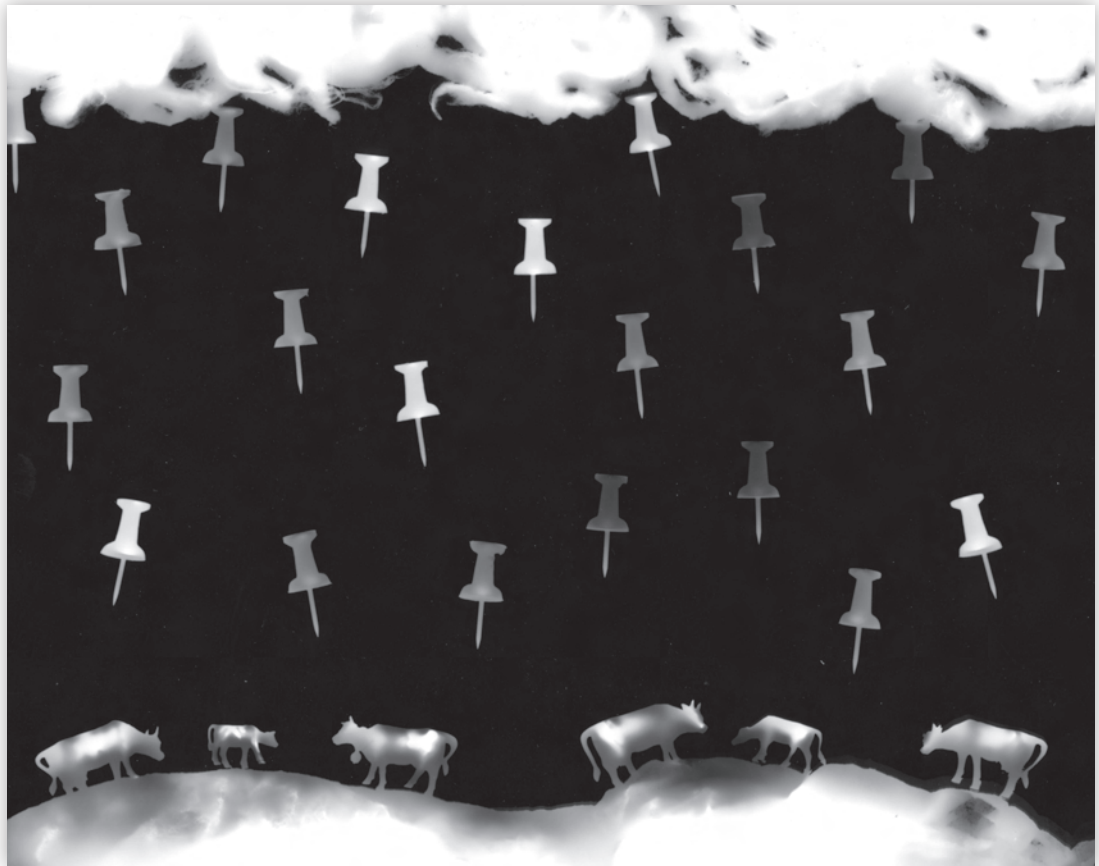
SPINSTERS, FULLY FURNISHED

Joe Milazzo

I lent her a cigarette. Actually, I gave it to her.
She didn't know it, but I was asking her to go away.
Shit, hold on; had I offered her comfort instead?
All I wanted was for it to be clear that she was no
comfort to me, that she filled me with impatience
that I was I just waiting for her sympathies to
expire behind a thin gray screen of exhaling. Then
I would be free to vanish into the mingling black
and white of the reception... the brown diffractions
swimming in a whiskey double. So she fished in her
purse for a lighter. And her hand found mine on
the railing. "Now, my grandmother," she said.



PLAY THAT GUITAR Elizabeth Fiechtner



PINS Joseph Martinez

BLESS ME...

Susan Blick
Featured Poet

From my baby brother when I was five
I took a lop-eared nubby bunny
His constant companion had only one eye
an ear with an end worn to threads
and a tail that was mashed too flat
It even smelled like him
I am a thief of security

One time I borrowed my best friend's sweater
I never gave it back
It was soft and pink and when she wore it
her cheeks were always flush,
her laughter rang like a bell
and her hair glimmered in the sun
I am a thief of beauty

At seventeen I met a boy
and when shyness sailed off the edge of the earth
I explored all of him
Between the tip of his tongue and the tips of his toes
I found the bright new land
He ended and began
I am a thief of innocence

From my neighbor's garden
on a lazy day
I plucked two big bell peppers
I sat on the stoop and ate them raw
to see what tended tasted like
I left their seeds scattered on the cement
I am a thief of patience

I was twenty-five when my grandfather died
and how delighted I would have been
to dance upon his grave
but in her grief I left my mother alone
although funerals are for the living
I didn't go home
I am a thief of solace

When I finally met a man
who wore his heart out on his sleeve
I was so enticed
I know he would have given it to me
but I took it - it was easy
I have everything
I am a thief of love

Then by chance I got a note
Folded it held a hand
I read it
over and over again
and stated I no longer waited
instead I wrote this
I am a thief of inspiration

...HAIL MARY

UNTITLED James G. Robinson

HEAVY IN MY JESUS YEAR

R. Flowers Rivera

I am a nation of disbelievers. One of many
Who only comes to geography by traveling.
Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, so they told me
The mothering instinct would come.

The stick turned a hesitant blue.

Cabbages, sweet onions, garlic, cayenne, and
Beans. In some Third World nightmare,
Women calling themselves friend admonished me to
Straight-arm all comfort foods.

Brown women everywhere howled their sympathies.

You are born. The telling is easier when I forget
The gibbous bloom of your crown cut free of living rock:
Broken water, fever, infection. Even flawed logic can be valid.
Pain has no reason, but to give it voice.

A gasp. Months, no sleep. I dreamt of leaving your father.

Stretch marks mar my breasts like much in a dry river-
Bed – forsaken places made sane by a red August
Heat. This summer, a woman with my face did
The unspeakable, she crucified the last fairytale.



NEPTUNE'S NET Eunice Bridges

NAKESHA, NAKED (oh, how I knew her shame)

Molly Boyce

there was this need in her
wrapped inside and outside
her core inordinate desire,

enrapt within his happiness,
engorged by love's intense
pain and morbid false regret

his agent of wants, wishes,
needs yet only mutely satisfied
by how he made her feel,

wanton though she appeared
there remained a naiveté
about her lust to take him

longingly, greedily, and often
upon their fine feather bed,
ripe passion that dissuaded her

from looking into his heart,
even when repressed repeatedly
by his callous hands in the dark

THE ANCIENT ONES

Beverly Sellers

THEY COME WHEN LEAVES GIVE WAY IN NOVEMBER – my mother’s elderly aunts, both beyond the grief that encircles our house. One smaller with sloping shoulders, drawn-back hair that frames a face creased with lines and knowing eyes. The other taller, erect, with pensive eyes beneath a high forehead, dark hair pinched in a knot at the back of her neck. Each dressed in black crepe with matching lace on collars; their shoes black too – black as tar – with low stacked heels and shoe strings laced up on top, the kind worn by those their age.

Their purpose? A death – my mother’s youngest sister; a member of my family since her own mother’s death years before. Last week she turned nineteen... just nineteen. So sudden, her death. An accident.

In times of loss, women in rural communities appear armed with an ability to cook and quote scripture. I hear one say to other in the kitchen “She’s gone to meet Jesus.” They speak in whispers as they move bowls of cream potatoes, English peas, and fried chicken onto the round table there in the kitchen; wipe hands on flour-cloth aprons and move back to the sink. Wash . . . dry . . . wash . . . dry. Back and forth they go. Put food out; take food up.

Men in wool gabardine suits with awkward-fitting ties gather in the front yard grouped in circles like men do after Sunday preaching or funeral services. Unlike their wives, they talk in deep-toned whispers, laughing low like they don’t want anyone else to hear.

Mourners enter the living room of our house, offer condolences. Women weep as they pass the open casket, turn to embrace another, say a word . . . smile slightly. They put their names in a book on a table. It seems strange to me – a child. I am six, going on seven.

Two women – one on each side of my Momma – enter from the next room. They support her as she moves towards the casket. Her face reflects more sadness than I have known; her eyes are red, filled with tears. I watch – afraid – but do not speak. Unknown to me, a new baby will join our family soon when Momma goes to the hospital to pick it out. For now, she returns to bed. I do not want to go to the casket and do not want to be led there. The young one lies so still.

In the kitchen a woman says, “She’s home.” I am not sure what that means. Her home is here . . . here with us, her family. What does that mean?

They will know, the ancient ones, my mother’s elderly aunts. They have wisdom and can sense what is what. I go to find them.

“Come here,” the straight-back one says.

The other one fiddles inside her crocheted purse and pulls out a stick of gum in a yellow wrapper and presses it into my hand.

"Which of your Momma's girls are you?" the older one asks, her hands folded in her lap.

"Becky," I answer.

"Ah, Becky," repeats the straight-back one. "You favor your Momma, child."

The older one complains, "My feet hurt. Weather's going to change."

"Yes, norther's coming. Tomorrow."

"How do you know?" I ask.

"We know. We Know."

"Look at her eyes," the older says to the other. They gaze into my eyes as if they are searching for something lost.

"She's special – her Momma's eyes."

"Mercy me, yes. Her Momma's eyes."

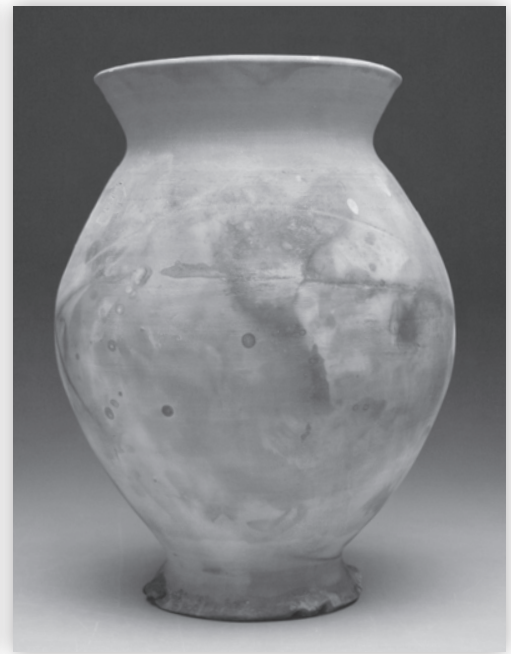
"Make a wish, child."

"A wish?"

IRON Tomiko Ueda



UNTITLED Tomiko Ueda



"Yes, a wish."

I close my eyes then open them.

"Did you make a wish?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, that's it. It will come true."

"How do you know?" I ask.

"We know. We know."

The straight-back one cups my chin in her hand, a hand with purple veins like worms from the ground. She looks at me a long time.

"Do not forget your family, child. Do not forget where you come from. Will you remember?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good, child. Good. She says and drops her hand from my chin. "You may go."

I find my cousins in the tree swing in the front yard.

The talcum from the old ones lingers in my nose as I turn to see them on the front porch. They wave. Then, I see them no more.

They knew. They knew. I am not afraid, anymore.

ABANDONED

Molly Boyce

time in a bottle

retelling my life,

washed up by a storm

found lying on far shores

now for the whole world to see

my fond collection of sand

in abandoned shells

GUARDA ESPIRITUS JARS Eunice Bridges





GREEN WOMAN Joe Prescher

PREDAWN AUBADE

R. Flowers Rivera

There was no sex involved.
 Barefoot, I went
 Down to the kitchen. And there,
 A reflection faced me, gaunt
 In the harsh light of the sliding, glass door,
 Perched
 In the flimsy plastic chair,
 Whittling dawn
 The way one contemplates
 The tart
 Pit of a nectarine. Her
 Gown fell open. Her
 Brow like a crate -
 Low, short square.
 Her breasts were still.
 She was beating back
 That need to flee
 Sitting poised
 Coiled in upon herself like a sprinter's
 Inner watch, wound tighter than tight,
 Anticipating the gun. And what could she say but,
 "This ain't what I signed on for.
 This ain't what you promised."
 I could've spoken out both sides of my mouth,
 Lied to that handsome woman
 About how I'm still the same person
 I used to be, that just around the corner
 Was going to be some
 Blue lights and scandal. No.
 No need to be
 Pretending for this other version
 Of who I once was when.

"This is it," I confessed. "Period. Face it:
 Babies, bills, a man, a mortgage, utilities, groceries."
 I thought. Now, no more truth to tell.
 Do what you gotta. Go
 If you must."

**DURING LECTURE
A DOG GETS HER HEAD STUCK
IN A CHEETOS CONTAINER**

R. Scott Yarbrough

During lecture, I can see out the window;
The students can't. Today a dog has found
a plastic, see-through, Sam's-sized canister
of Cheeto balls with two meshed inseparably,
sugared with the last of a Coke and a sticky
Jolly Rancher, apple I would guess.

Between Antigone defying Creon, the dog just
managed to get her head stuffed like a pimento
into the clear, Sam's-sized plastic olive. After
lapping up the Cheetos she
found her head stuck. For minutes she spun around; Antigone
said she had heard Creon's decree. Then she galloped;
Ismene reminded Creon that Haemon was betrothed
to Antigone. Then in desperation, she wagged her head
like growling a towel; Antigone tells the Chorus
she'd rather not have to die to be a martyr. She finally lay
in defeat, head in plastic globe, beginning to fog over
from her wet breath, the heat turning her soul fluid.

Antigone hanged herself; Haemon spat on his father and killed
himself rather half-to-the-hilt and Creon's wife, Eurydice,
quite fed up with it all, leaned on a knife at the alter.

I dismissed class; Blaine stood and immediately felt the
authority to noun and name the mutt's predicament
saying she looked Sandy Cheeks on Sponge Bob.

I watched as the students swam outside
and soaped Sandy's neck and set her free. Then they
were off to conquer land problems: Sponge Bobs
and Patricks off to the Crusty Crab to
solve the dark problems of the sea where cartoons talk
and girl squirrels can live in harmony and can pester
my Squigward muse to understand such brilliant foolishness.

IF POEMS

WERE CHILDREN

Philip Fullman

If poems were children
I'd lose custody of mine

Be hauled off to jail
My picture in the paper

Mug shot on TV
Horrible things said about me

That's him

He's the one

He ignores them

Poor things

All of it true

How I dote on the youngest

How smart and witty she is

I just love the way she strings her
words together and paints the most
wonderful pictures

Not like my oldest

The way they ramble

and lack meaning

jumping around from thought
to thought

I'm ashamed of them

They aren't mine

No

This one

this one is my smartest

funniest

My best yet

Of this one am I most proud

Until I write something new

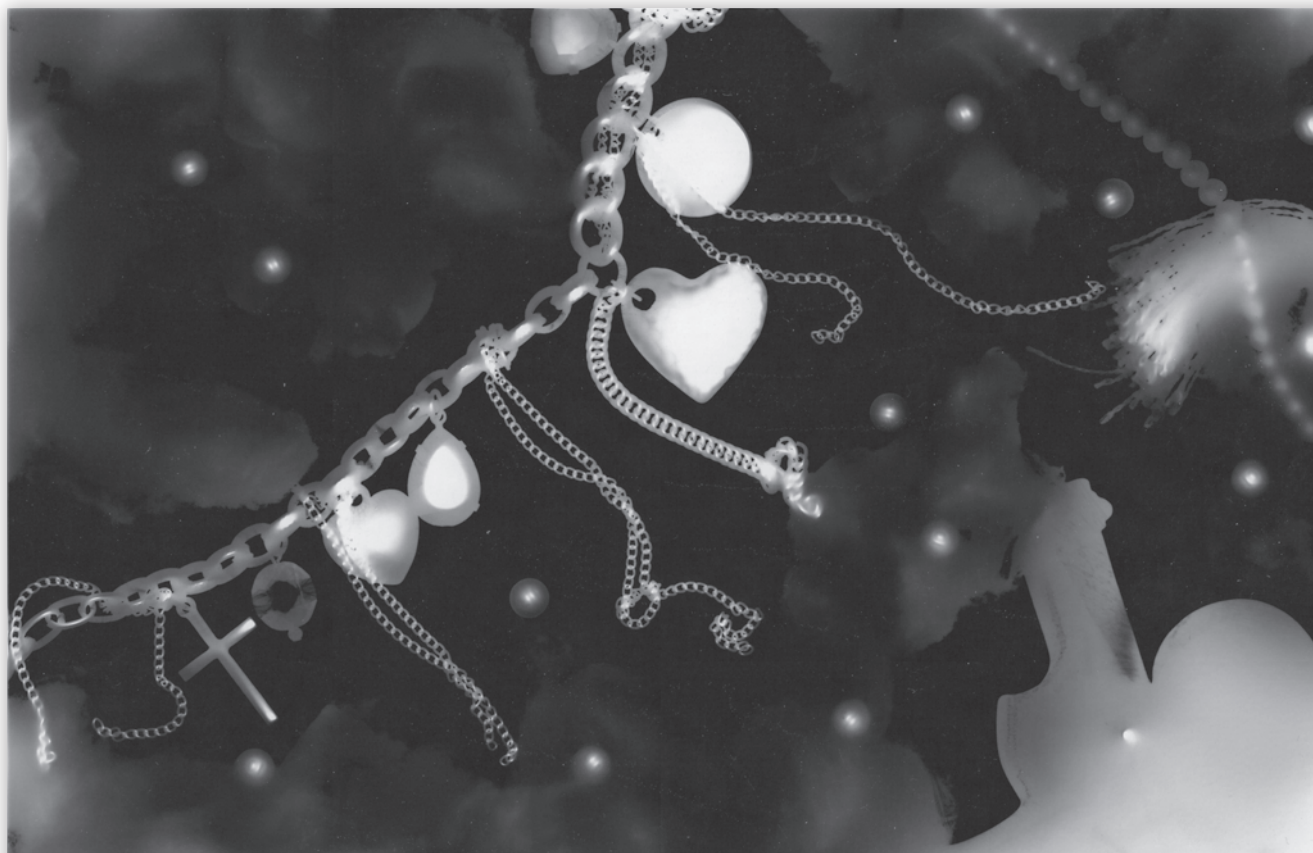
ANANDA

Chad Hansen

A harried thought did hurry me beyond the farthest fars;
for not a soul to worry me is found among the stars.
I bask amid the dark and cold, or swing around a sun
that's burned here since before the oldest stars had yet begun.
I drift through all the points of Space, and instants too of Time;
meandering with gliding grace, celestially sublime.
I dance between the seven stars we call the Pleiadese;
then swirl the sifted sands of Mars around Orion's knees.
I drape the Horsehead Nebula, a black and mystic veil,
upon the pallid Pegasus, then off to Saturn sail.
I navigate the universe as if it were my own,
and divagate to stars diverse; or stop to drop a stone
into the Sea of Dreams, behind the Moon's reflective face;
and smile to see the Sun unwind its spirals into Space.
I race around the Hyades, then dive into the dark
that lies between the Galaxies, devoid of any spark.

Beyond the reach of matter, I perambulate, and pause
to smell the Rosette growing by the Little Dog. His paws
are resting on the Unicorn, whose mythological,
but magically enchanted, horn casts spells upon the Bull.
And near the horns of Taurus, too, I hold Orion's bow,
insuring that his aim is true to hit the mark. I know
the Bull's all-seeing Eye, the red Al Debaran, will leer
and do its best to scare the dreaded Hunter stalking near.
I cut across the Cosmic Sea and leave the hunt behind
to search for sweet serenity and placid peace of mind.
So off to pale Vulpecula, the wily little Fox,
or up to Small Nubecula's Autumnal Equinox
I saunter and ascend. With light-like speed I'm apt to shroud
a constellation, or to blight a Magellanic Cloud.
And when at last I do descend, and quickly quit my flight,
I fall to Earth at journey's end, and sleep away the night.

UNTITLED Elizabeth Fiechtner



SCARECROW'S LAST THOUGHT

Anthony Armstrong

"YOUR BRAIN IS CHANGING OZ FOR THE BETTER," said Tinman.

"My big, beautiful heart says thumping great—thumping great; there is something great in our future for your big brain to think."

Scarecrow stood with Tinman in the palace of green, and he looked out on Oz and smiled at the scene. The rolling hills of green with bright colors divided, by long yellow brick, stirred something inside him.

"Wait," said Scarecrow as he looked down at his boots. "I just had a thought. Let me think and take root."

Tinman was looking down into the palace yard, "The palace horse has turned green again. They won't find him for hours. I'll tell you what we need, and I'll tell with great speed, we need a better way to travel than a horse with a saddle..."

Tinman faded out as Scarecrow began to think. How should I think the thought I thought I should think? For if my thought is not the thought that ought to be thought, what should I think, for if not, what ought?

He pondered this question until the thought left him dazed, and instead he thought of his cornfield where he hung his early days; where he talked with ladybugs and centipedes and toads; where he talked of the horizon and the yellow brick road.

"It must go on forever," he had said to what he thought was the ladybug's head. "In any direction, I can't see the end."

"The end is down at your feet. Down at your feet," the ladybug replied; repeating himself, as ladybugs often do with great pride.

"But all I see are my boots," said Scarecrow, looking down and around.

"When you stop walking, stop walking; the road stops too, stops too. You can go forward if you want, but never back. A road is not a road if you just stay where you're at."

Several years later, now that he had a brain to remember, Scarecrow repeated the words of the ladybug and pondered. Those are the words that I ought to have thought. When you stop walking, the road stops too. You can go on...but never back—a road is not a road if you stay where you're at.

With a sudden rush of jubilation, of joy and great awe, Scarecrow knew these words would forever change the great Oz.

In a dark corner of his painted sack-head, Scarecrow's straw began to twitch. It snapped and cracked and sometimes snapped, as it worked its magic from way in the back. It thought of math and matics, and formulaic habits. Lines and curves and prisms in the sky. Levers and pulleys and scaffolding high.

Like a witch to ruby slippers, he rushed to good Glinda's door, and he poured out what his brain and his heart had in store. "Glinda, I thought of the most wondrous things. Schematics and plans and industrial machines. Telephones and typewriters and great super roads. Public transportation and easy prefab homes."



TRAMPA Mirtha Aertker

"Your brain is truly wondrous," Glinda replied with a smile. "We must gather the others and talk for a while."

So Scarecrow and Glinda rounded up the thinkers and builders and workers a-plenty. They gathered them together in the palace and the city. Scarecrow addressed them. "First things first, we need some inventions--to make life better, not worse. We'll have better roads, not made of brick. The roads must go everywhere, so we can move about quick. We can sell our munchkin crafts, and build hospitals for the sick."

So for days and weeks and weeks and months, the builders built and the thinkers think. They invented Oz money and gave it out freely, and people gave it back as they bought goods greedily.

New buildings filled the fields surrounding the city, and new roads were laid through, soon jostling and busy. New jobs filled the pages of "The Oz Tattler," a brand new subsidiary of Straw Man Endeavors; and Ozzers, as the people decided they liked to be called, flocked to the city for jobs and money and money without jobs.

The heavy traffic back and forth wore out the yellow brick road, so a team of roadologists built great super-ozways, eight times as wide as the yellow brick of old days. Ozzers praised the road, big and smooth like glass, and roadologists and earthmovers cut through every field, wood and impassable pass. The haunted woods came down, and the apple-throwing trees were moved far from town.

The countryside was filled with manufacturing plants and machines. From sun up to sundown, the city was bustling with the biggest commotion and calamity that Oz had ever seen.

The builders built homes farther out from the city, called the Munchkin Bungalows and Gardens Good Witchy. General Monchampoo hired out his winged monkeys, so monkey lifts became the rage, carrying workers for money. With access to the city via road so convenient, the builders spread out, with steel and cement. The Ozzers thought these communities were simply superb and filled them up faster than they could say "superb is the word."

Then one day Scarecrow sat high on his hill, and he noticed the tractors and cranes were all still.

"We've cut through every field and swamp and wood," the roadologists said. "There's no place left without roads, and surely that's good."

"Not true," said Scarecrow. "We must build out of Oz and across the desert sands. We must connect with other people and let Oz reach other lands."

So Scarecrow and the builders began a monstrous task. They built to the north, south, east and the west. They built all the day and into the night. They created new roads with nothing in sight. Three months they worked and then some more. Finally, they reached a road not seen before.

"What do we do now?" asked a munchkin who squinted and scratched his head. Scarecrow looked around. "I don't know," was all he said.

The munchkins gathered around Scarecrow and sat down to wait.

"What if a wicked witch comes by?"

"Grab a bucket of water—just in case."

"What is that? What is that?" someone asked as he pointed.

"I think it's a horse," said a voice disjointed.

As they watched, the object moved closer and grew large and fat.

"It's not slowing down!" yelled a voice from the back.

With a sudden rush of wind and dirt and noise, the object roared by without any pause.

Three Munchkins threw water and ran from the slaughter.

"Whatever it was," said one shaking with fear. "It just finished eating. I saw people inside as it grew near."

"It didn't eat them," said Scarecrow. "That was a wagon of some sort. It must have been powered by an invisible horse."

"I've think I've seen enough," said one worker to another. "I want to go home; this has been such a great bother."

Everyone agreed and they packed up their stuff; they began the walk back because they all had enough.

On their return, they saw more horseless wagons zoom by, coming and going without hello or goodbye.

When they finally reached Oz, the road was full of wagons, honking and rattling, and coughing smoke like sick dragons. One curious little wagon, of the oddest color and shape, had the mayor of Munchkin Land, with his big shiny face.

A hotel was built where the mayor's house once stood. Where the park once was, were buildings not woods. There were Munchkin stores and Ozstaurants. Munchkin shops

sold Munchkin dolls and painted Oztrays. Little wagons sped by, wheezing noise and smoke. The drivers leaned out and yelled, "Get off the road!"

The Emerald City had changed even more than imagined. Surrounding the outskirts were thousands of wagons. They were all parked in rows like poppies of metal; they leaked fluids and goo and smelled something terrible. At the entrance to the city, you needed tickets to get in, so the workers stood in line, their patience wearing thin. Eventually, they learned, after an hour and a half, they needed to use the service entrance, way in the back.

Scarecrow and the workers walked through the back alleys, stepped over piles of trash and plastic bags of laundry.

TRAIN #2 Austin Worth



As they cut through the palace, Scarecrow was stopped for pictures, with children and parents and autograph seekers. Babies would cry and cameras would shoot, and little children pulled clumps of straw from his dirty red boots.

Scarecrow went alone to the top of the west tower, and sat down on the floor to think for an hour. He looked out the window to survey the new Oz. He saw tourists with cameras, wearing shirts that said, "I SAW THE WIZARD," with matching hats on their head. Palace guards ran back and forth, cleaning crews too, as the noise of the people rumbled and grew.

As the sun went down, and the air turned brown, Scarecrow looked at his boots and saw three pieces of straw. The power lines hummed and the traffic droned on, and he lost himself in a really long thought.

"Scarecrow...Scarecrow!"

Scarecrow looked up.

It was Tinman.

"I said the sun is coming up...you haven't said a word all night."

"Is it time for more pictures?"

"What pictures do you mean? Do you feel all right?"

Scarecrow stood up and looked out on green rolling hills. He saw the grass and the trees and brick roads in the fields.

"I must have thought it all up," he said half out-loud.

"Thought what?" asked the Tinman, raising his brow.

"Oh I thought the most wondrous things..." but he trailed off as he spoke.

Scarecrow looked down at his boots, at Tinman and then, he looked out the window once more and again. Without saying a word, he ran out of the room, down the tower, through the palace and out the city gates. Little bits of straw fell to the ground, but he had no time to waste. He dashed down the brick road, through the haunted woods, through the valleys and fields until he knew where he stood—at his cornfields once home, with the pole he once loved.

He stared at the pole, grabbed the cross bar and climbed. As he extended each arm, he saw nails rusted with lime. He lifted his legs and kicked his boots to the dirt. Then the straw in his legs began to slide out first. Straw after straw fell down and around, his clothes became loose, his chest fell to the ground. He could no longer look up, only forward and down. Out of the corner of his eye he saw his boots as they lay.

Then he thought his last thought:

"This is a good day."

TRAIN #6 Austin Worth



**STATUE STOOD
WITH SILENCED LEGS**

Greg McClure

statue stood with silenced legs
never held by her or his
(monolith monument obelisk)
known by almost and loved by nearly
everyone all (both here and there)
paid their dues to statue still
skyline stature merits awe
pure as stone and strong as same
masses (mad and merry) knelt
dressed their front and turned their back
(monument obelisk monolith)
they sighed her wonder they breathed her praise
one night nature ran his course
and statue burned as by he passed
to everyone's no she held her first
joy through pain in natures sleep
hammer by handle (swing and swung)
forth and back and down and up
(obelisk monolith monument)
even stone falls stone by stone
nature's course was sooner later
and statue's silence broken dreamed
(as seasons turned in timely fashion)
known just once and loved once less

LAWS 1 Leslie Laws



LAWS 2 Leslie Laws



m

SHOPPING

Betsy Giron

MARIA YANKED TWICE AT THE SHOPPING CART to free it from its captive ranks. "I don't think he suspected anything. He couldn't have," she mumbled. She pulled her list from her knock-off Coach purse and tucked the loose L'Oreal #52 strand of hair behind her ear. "Bread, mayonnaise, margarine, frozen pizza, Kibbles-n-Bits... He did give me a strange look while drinking his coffee, though." Maria rolled the cart forward with some degree of difficulty. It had a bad wheel and pulled her to the right. The smell of fresh baked bread was the direction she maneuvered it towards. "What if he looked at my phone? I had it locked, I thought. Or what if he followed me to the pharmacy?" Lost in what-ifs, Maria started squeezing fresh bread loaves. At the third loaf, she gasped and squeezed a little too hard. "I think I left that receipt in my coat pocket." Maria remembered her bronze colored, faux fur coat that she wore to the Friday night show with her husband. During the movie she had a chill and put her hands in the pockets. She vaguely remembered feeling papers in one of them. That was the same coat she wore with him on the Wednesday afternoon before movie night.

As Maria labored through the butcher block, despising the sight of raw slabs of beef and the smell of crab legs, she thought of her husband's subtle accusations while he stabbed his Bisquick pancakes that morning. "He asked me what I was doing today. He's never cared about that before," she said, grabbing a package of butcher's bones for Grunt. The butcher yelled out, "Hey Maria, how's it cookin'?" and winked at her as she passed. Maria smiled her Crest Advanced White smile and continued on to the condiments. Her pace was at a walk, walk, pull as she shifted the turning cart every few steps. "I had better think of a reason for the receipt. Surely, he will question me tonight." Maria picked out the expensive Best Foods mayonnaise at first, by mistake, then she replaced it with the 'buy one get one free' store brand. "I better make his favorite dinner tonight, maybe the roast and potatoes that he always wants on football Sundays. Of course, then he might suspect something anyway since it's Tuesday."

Maria hefted the thirty pound bag of Kibbles-n-Bits into the cart, not noticing that it was the liver flavor instead of the beef. Now the cart was too hard to push and she had to go around to the front of it and pull. This was not easy to do either in shiny, black, three inch heels. The chill of the frozen pizza section escaped into her body. There it stayed as she stood in the checkout line. Giving in to the power of suggestive selling, she grabbed a Milky Way bar and threw it in the cart. A little satisfaction from shopping wouldn't hurt, she defended.

The digital beep, beep of the scanners felt like the seconds ticking down to a bomb's explosion. Her thoughts accelerated with her heart beats as she prepared to face him. Then, suddenly her phone rang... it was him.

they sighed her wonder they breathed her praise . . .

THE COAT FROM VIA CAVOUR

Dallie Clark

I am wearing the coat you bought me in Rome
where we walked all those cold nights, the coat
I saw on a hundred Italian girls –

but those girls are not here
on this ice-laden Texas morning when I wear
the coat from Via Cavour
and walk the backyard with our old dog.

Nowhere do I see
the Italian girls in our sleeping
tattered garden, no where in this ice
drip-dripping place around me.

I spy - and then touch – tiny ice orbs
on an outside table. In my bare hands,
they are like slippery Cantaloupe seeds
carved from a summer I can't remember

when the sun roared and there were
no ice orbs, no ice drip-dripping, no coat from Rome,
only a very loud sun that Italian girls love.



DETAILS Donna Gors



BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S

Amanda North

Bed, she lays in it awake till five a.m.
Watching Holly Golightly while the rest of the world is in REM.
She hates her, she loves her, she envies her, she laughs with her, cries with her.
Ironically she is that fabulously sad girl Capote wrote about.
Asleep all day
While others accelerate through their day downtown, she sleeps.
Five p.m., the sun descends and she feels the shift
Awake in the dark, again.
The bottle of cabernet on her bedside table from the night before is tempting
It's too early, she needs Eggos first.
Her vintage Stones shirt reeks of incense, Parliaments and Patchouli.
She is fabulously sad while she puts on her fabulously tall stilettos.
Semi new to town, but already a local pub knows her name.
They always know her name.
Somehow she is fresh faced and the center of attention as she strolls in
The mahogany wood and red illumination of the bar flatter her
Masking her deep, dark and sunken eyes.
Jameson on the rocks and fries please
"Well Sparky, where the hell did life go?" she asks an old man in a coy yet murky tone.
They talk, and she drowns herself in witty, empty flirtatious banter
Her alluring appearance makes her stick out like a sore thumb
It always has.
She is tired and weary, running low and the carbs and the whiskey won't cut it tonight.
The burning sensation in her chest is what she swears to be her Parliament death
But to her dismay it is just loneliness.
Somehow she knows this is not what Breakfast at Tiffany's is supposed to be.

she is that fabulously sad girl . . .

Philip Fullman

Golfers will tell you
 they'll hit 100 bad shots
 to hit one
 where the sweet spot of the club
 meets the sweet spot of the ball
 making the sound you always think of
 when you think of a golf ball being hit
 driving the ball straight down the fairway
 the club feels so good in your hands
 you forget the last 100 shots
 the one in the trees
 the one you lost
 taking a drop
 the one you sliced so badly on 9
 it hit a cart at the tee box on 8
 all forgotten
 ready to hit 100 more
 into the sand
 the rough
 and the water hazard
 just to hear that sound

Poetry's the same
 you write 100 bad poems
 about the girl who cheated on you
 or the one you think cheated on you
 but could never prove
 but that's okay because you cheated on her
 that time you told her you were out of town
 when you were actually down the street
 spending the weekend with that girl
 you both work with that she can't stand
 that you want to sleep with
 but act like you can't stand
 so she won't think anything is going on

just to write that one poem
 the one you don't cringe when you read
 the one that's as good on paper
 as it was in your head
 the one a reader gets
 even though they had to work for it
 giving you a type of bond with them
 encouraging you to write 100 more
 abusing metaphors
 comparing sailing to freedom
 love to just about everything
 and golf to poetry



UNTITLED 2 Norma Jean Montejano

HOW TO WAKE-UP FROM A NIGHTMARE: A POSITION ON THE U.S. HEALTHCARE DISEASE

Paul Boynton

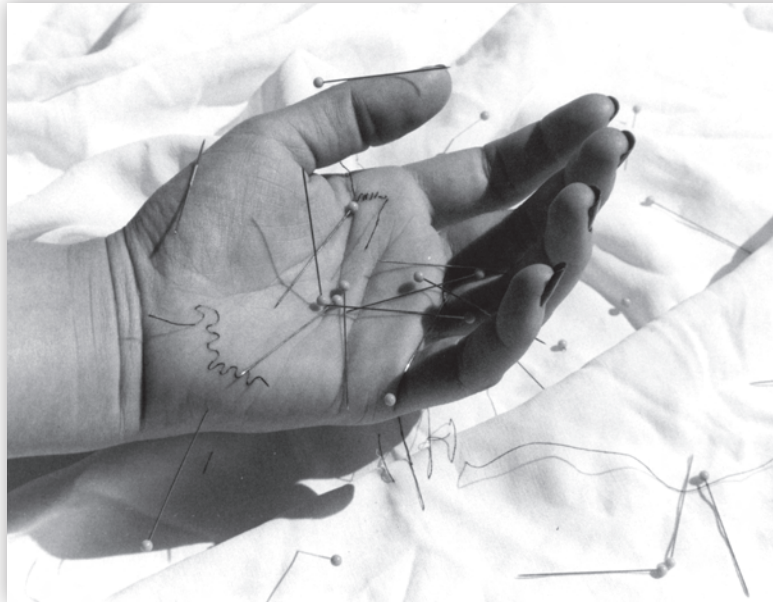
Winner of the Honors Scholarship Essay Contest

A DISASTER LOOMS OVER THE HORIZON as Americans kick off the New Year with their ears to the ground and in a tempered panic. With a weakening American dollar, a sky-rocketing national debt, international war, real estate crises, and rising oil prices, *recession* becomes a terrifying word. The economy is haunted by visions of a new depression; not only here in the U.S., but throughout the whole world too. In discussions for change, the current healthcare situation is often brought to the forefront. Its impact on America's well-being is similar to that of a disease. It is my position that the healthcare disease has become an epidemic, and that prevention is necessary for reform.

THE NIGHTMARE

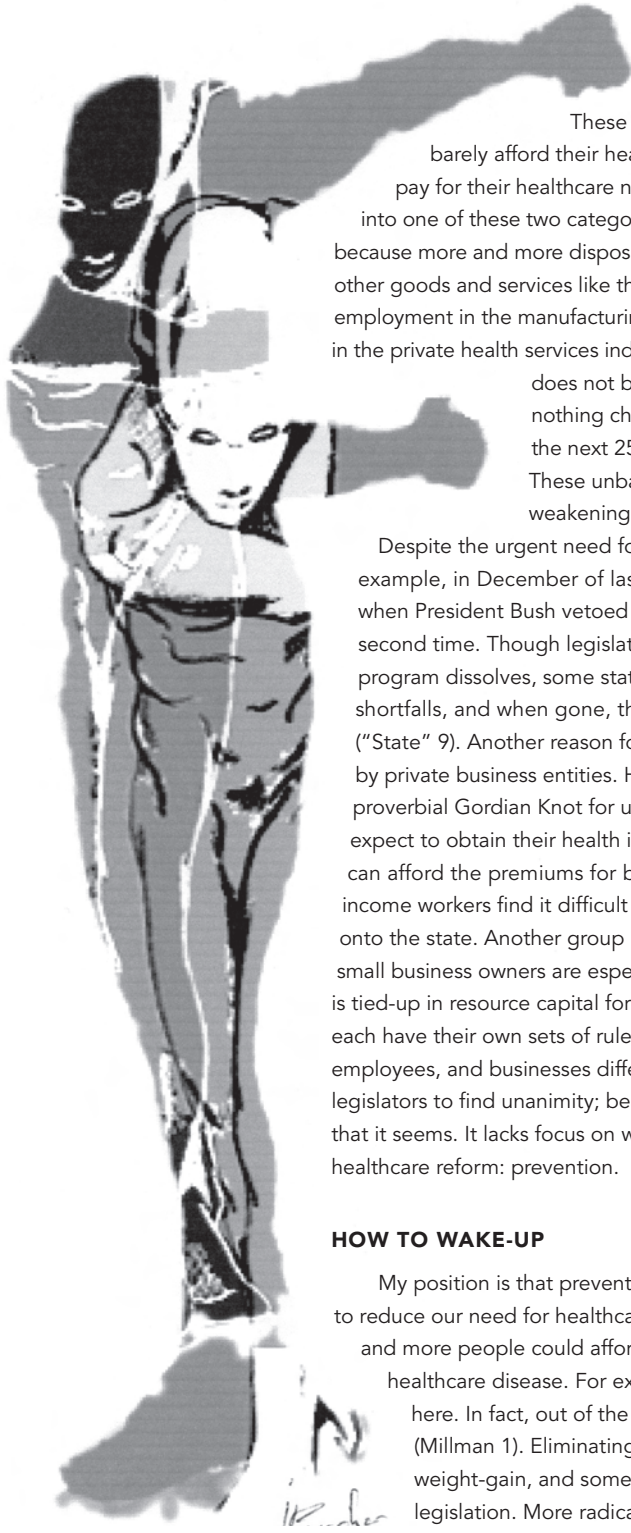
To reform healthcare would be to reform our entire socioeconomic way of life, and there are numbers to prove it. They are both staggering and dismal. For instance, healthcare is the most expensive single category of a state's spending budget. In total, states spend 32 percent of their entire budget on healthcare ("State" 9). So I was not surprised to find out that in ten years, the federal government is projected to double its per year healthcare spending to a whopping 4 trillion dollars (Gibson and Gibson 21). No other sector in the economy has nearly that high a rate of inflation. Even with all that spending, many Americans are still without a balanced healthcare system. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics released a report last December that revealed "Nearly one in five Americans can't afford needed healthcare" ("Health" 1). So right now, approximately 61 million Americans do not receive the healthcare they need ("Population"). Moreover, many of those people do not even have access to healthcare. An article in Nation's Health went on to summarize part of that same report's findings:

[The report] found [that] more than 40 million people lack access to the healthcare they need. And 20 percent of U.S. adults needed and did not receive medical care, prescription medicine, mental health care, dental care, or eyeglasses in 2005, because they could not afford them.



UNTITLED 1

Norma Jean Montejano



DANCER Joe Prescher

These statistics still do not account for the people who could barely afford their healthcare in the first place, or those who used credit to pay for their healthcare needs. In fact, more than one in four adults currently falls into one of these two categories (“Health” 1). Household consumption goes down, because more and more disposable income is being spent on healthcare instead of other goods and services like those of the manufacturing industry. Since the year 2000, employment in the manufacturing industry has fallen by 18 percent, but “employment in the private health services industry has risen by 16%” (Gibson and Gibson 21). This does not bode well for such a diversified labor force like ours. If nothing changes, then “30% to 40% of all new jobs created over the next 25 years will be in health care” (Gibson and Gibson 21). These unbalanced figures describe an inefficient economy and a weakening private sector.

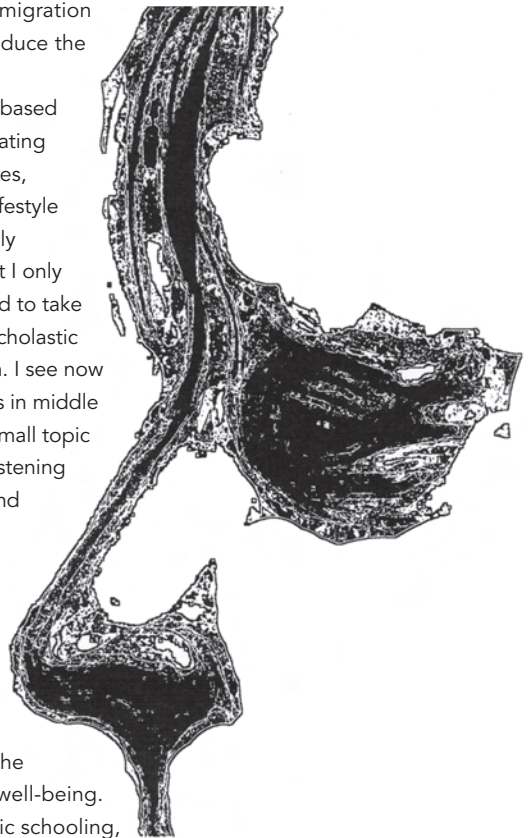
Despite the urgent need for change, progress has been slow-going at best. For example, in December of last year, states were given another healthcare migraine when President Bush vetoed the State Children’s Health Insurance Program for the second time. Though legislation for a grace period is expected to pass before the program dissolves, some states as early as March will experience significant budget shortfalls, and when gone, the program will leave some 6 million children uninsured (“State” 9). Another reason for reform set-backs is that healthcare is largely provided by private business entities. How to take back the distribution of healthcare is the proverbial Gordian Knot for universal healthcare advocates. Most people obtain or expect to obtain their health insurance through their employer, but not all employers can afford the premiums for bulk insurance packages. Consequently, middle- to low-income workers find it difficult to obtain healthcare, and so the burden falls once again onto the state. Another group hurt in a similar way is the entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial small business owners are especially burdened, because a large amount of their money is tied-up in resource capital for their new businesses. Private sector healthcare providers each have their own sets of rules and liabilities that affect people like entrepreneurs, employees, and businesses differently. This wide variety of red-tape makes it difficult for legislators to find unanimity; besides, a universal healthcare system is not the panacea that it seems. It lacks focus on what I believe to be the most important aspect of healthcare reform: prevention.

HOW TO WAKE-UP

My position is that prevention is the key to healthcare reform. If we took measures to reduce our need for healthcare, then we would not be spending so much on it, and more people could afford to have it. In Texas, we have many symptoms of the healthcare disease. For example, the obesity pandemic is very much a presence here. In fact, out of the top-ten fattest cities in the U.S., Texas is home to six (Millman 1). Eliminating trans-fats is a highly tossed around idea for lowering weight-gain, and some states – like New York – have already passed such legislation. More radically, I propose an “hours of operation curfew” be placed on fast-food restaurants. As if their viral ubiquity isn’t bad enough, fast-food

chains encourage unhealthy eating habits by staying open unreasonably late into the night. For example, Taco Bell® encourages people to indulge in “fourth-meals”. There is no reason to eat a greasy taco at 1 a.m. Greed and gluttony are the founding principles of the fast-food industry, and I think a curfew law would really turn heads toward moderation. Also here in Texas, illegal immigration exacerbates the healthcare disease and can be deterred. Milton Friedman, an American noble prize winning economist, said that it is impossible to have a welfare state with open borders. I could not agree more. Illegal immigrants are receiving healthcare benefits, and tax payers are footing the bill. Richard Wolf of USA Today reported that “the [Texas] state comptroller estimated illegal immigrants cost hospitals \$1.3 billion in 2006” (1). This must stop. We cannot keep giving hand-outs to illegals. A more secure border coupled with tough immigration healthcare legislation can prevent healthcare cost inflation, and reduce the burden on the state.

Education is absolutely critical to a healthcare reform program based on prevention. We need to provide more and better means of educating people on certain key subjects: diet, exercise, communicable diseases, human sexuality, mental health, substance use/abuse, and healthy lifestyle practices. I think high schools should require students to take a highly detailed and contemporary health course regimen. It is a shame that I only had to take one measly semester of Health in high school. I have had to take the same American Government course four times throughout my scholastic career, yet I have only been required to take one semester of Health. I see now that this is far from satisfactory. My proposed course regimen begins in middle school. It will start by teaching primarily diet but also the relatively small topic of healthy lifestyle practices. By healthy lifestyle practices, I mean fastening your seat belt, how to properly lift heavy objects, sleeping habits, and ergonomics. The tone and detail of the courses will mature as the student matures. Exercise will take center stage in 8th grade. They will learn why and how to exercise regularly. Substance use/abuse as well as communicable diseases – STDs – will be the focus for freshman. Sophomore year will introduce human sexuality and mental health. Junior and senior year will be cumulative course years. These courses will bring together all seven topics and focus on making health an active part of the students’ lives. The hope is to emphasize and implement healthy living and promote well-being. This health course regimen could even be offered outside of public schooling, and I really think it would help people become less dependent on healthcare. **CRETE** Joe Prescher



Prevention is the key. Money alone will not solve this problem, and the statistics make that very clear. We continue to spend more and more money, but things aren't changing for the better. It's because the health of the American people is declining faster than the money grow. Healthcare reform is impossible without the cooperation of the people. Government alone should not be held responsible. We as members of society must take the initiative to be educated, and we must show some self-control, or we will further deteriorate our healthcare system and our way of life.

UGLY SNOW

Amber King



WE HAD TO TRAVEL THROUGH UGLY SNOW, the kind that's slushy and not at all attractive. Unfortunately, that's the kind of snow you usually find. You have to get to a good snow soon if you want to have some real fun with it.

It snowed fourteen inches the night before, and heated up considerably when the morning sun invaded. Made the snow crunch. Roger brought me on this trip for apparently no reason. He had a way of telling me without telling me.

"Sweetcakes, will you hold this axe for your old man?" He handed it over to me without even so much as a grunt. I had to tell him it was too heavy, as when I held it, the weight of the axe made me too heavy to move. At first I thought that this made me a weakling, but to be honest, I would never want to hold the burden that he bears.

Now Roger? He was the kind of guy to spit in your face and then ask for the kiss. That was what he's been doing to me for the past fourteen years of my life, and smiling it away every time.

"Oh, sweetcakes, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked you to do that."

He probably came alive during the night when I would sleep, at bars and clubs. Hanging out with the guys, drinking beer, and cracking blonde jokes. I'm blonde. Mom was blonde too, before it finally got to her and she died of cancer. She used to stick up for herself. But then he stomped out her spirit. Devoured her soul. He doesn't mean nothing by it, though'.

Roger took back the axe with a smile on his face. Funny. I wondered what he thought he was going to do with it. He really knew how to kill without getting in trouble for it. He'll tell you all about it, too.

"I think that's the first time in my whole life that I've ever seen you carry an axe." I kick at the crunchy snow.

"Should have seen me in my golden days." He rubbed his nose with his free hand. I cringed. His walk proved uneven with the weight of the axe. I imagined that we might be on our way to kill a creature. He loves to do it because it's harder to get away with killing people. He went into a story about how he was a master lumberjack in his teenage years, helping his dad make furniture. Well, that's wonderful Roger. Just like you're a master mechanic, lover, fisher, and father. My hands are tucked deep into my pockets. Searching for nothing, and getting it.

"We should go home. That's what I would like."



TREES AND SHADOWS Donna Gors

Roger gives me a look like he's confused as to why I'm not excited about our lumberjacking experience. He kept on changing shoulders that the axe would rest on. I was developing a tic just watching it.

"What makes you say that, sweetcakes?"

I said nothing. He did nothing to probe me further.

We came upon this one tree that Roger seemed to like anyway. Yule tree. Feeling it up, Roger smiled. Almost like he just found a dumb, drunk blonde at a club. 'Only go for blondes' he would say when he got home. 'Stupid as bricks and good looking too'.

"I want to watch TV." I said.

"Faith, who's going to help me cut down this Christmas tree? I don't got a son, so why not bring you?" Roger didn't really need me there, he just wanted someone to brag to.

"Isn't it illegal to cut down trees here? I mean, we're on city property."

"Doing the right thing isn't always right," he replied.

I know I was right. We're on this plot of land that's behind our house. He insisted on making the walk, too. Saying that we'll make snowmen on the way. The snow is hard, Roger. The warmth has a tendency to do that.

He picks up the axe, and positions himself to cut down the tree like a golfer at the tee. Only the tee is up off the ground. A couple of pseudo puts and then the real thing. I could hear his leather jacket rip when contact was made. Then an expletive came. He really doesn't mean it though.

You know, my father's never cut down a tree before. He just makes up stories. Just like he did earlier. But that's okay.

We don't have a fence behind our house, but then again most people didn't in this area. Roger started blabbing on about this one time that he went hunting. I've heard the story at least thirteen times. Took to the gun like a natural, he did. Shot more animals than his grandfather did, even though he hadn't been hunting before. Wanted to take me hunting someday, too. Had to wait a little longer for me because I'm a girl. I feel like a deer each time he tells me the story. At least I'm a smart deer. Only the stupid ones get shot. I rubbed my nose. Rubbed my ears. No earmuffs. "...And we've been hunting every year since. I always get the biggest kill." Roger finished. Same way he's finished the last ten times. He hasn't taken another swing at that tree since he started talking. So typical. Doesn't finish the things he starts.

"You haven't said much," he said, aiming his next swing. His form was totally off. At least off from the lumberjacks I've seen in the fairy tale movies, the ones he would pop in for us when he wanted 'him' time. Which was all the time, especially since Mom died. Which was a long time ago.

"Well, Roger, I don't have much to say I guess." A little snippy. But since it fell short of a real answer, he prodded further.

"You know, Faith." He swung at the tree again. A crack upon impact. Missed the first mark. Another expletive.

"You know what?" I replied, leaning against a tree behind me, yawning. Still rubbing my ears, I can't help but having found a small sense of success in the fact that Roger's system was thrown from that last swing.

"What?"

"You said 'You know Faith?'"

"Oh right, right." He said. "You know, Faith." Want to hit him every time he does that too. Repeating himself, that is. He calls this 'quality time'. I shovel my hands into my armpits as he gathers his spilled marbles. "Sometimes you just have to say what you mean." He pulled back his axe, in an attempt to remedy the mistake he made with the second swing. "That's my policy, anyway. Thought I might pass it on to you."

"Oh, right, your 'policy'."

"What do you mean by that?" Instead of taking another hack at the curvy tree, he turned himself toward me. He had a hard face, one that you wouldn't look at and say to yourself 'Daddy!'. I can't stop looking at the snow at my feet.

"You know, I don't think that's your policy."

Dad put down his axe on a nearby stump, his back to me. I kicked some snow in his direction. Well, I have to admit that I looked at the axe, then I looked at the stump. It wasn't a pretty stump. So I guess it wasn't a pretty tree either in its day. I can kind of relate with that stump. Having your life hacked away when there was probably a lot of life left, even if it wasn't a pretty life.

"Are you saying I'm not an honest man?"

"Well, you're a father, but you're no daddy."

I picked up my gaze and looked him in the eye. I can't say much about how he looked right then. Red-faced and prickly along the chin, his hair very well could have been mistaken for dark with that hood on. It's like I was looking at him for the first time. Or not. His whole frame stiffened and I can tell he's biting his tongue.

"I've done everything right by you, Faith. The least you could do is believe in your old man."

"Right. The least." I switched the feet that I was leaning my weight on. I pulled my face out of my tightened hoodie, my mouth anyway. "I've always been an underachiever."

Now his face was turning colors. "Now I know that isn't true. You make great grades."

"You missed my point." I turned away.

He picked up the axe. I almost expected him to throw the death bringer, but he didn't. Mustering his frustration, he hacked away at the tree. CLAK...CLAK...CLAK... Missing the first spot each time. I could have mistaken him for someone with real determination.

"You know. You've never been this real with me." I said. He tore his jacket away in the pause of demolishing the tree, the molested one. CLAK... CLAK... That time he hit the spot. I smiled. "Oh, you're getting there." CLAK... another miss. My interest waned. Roger doesn't know this, but this was one of many times that I laughed at him. I would rather be a smart deer than a stupid hunter. CLAK... He'll cut down that tree just like he can fish, just like he takes care of his family. CLAK...

I took a step away, looking at what lay behind me. Most of these trees would never be cut down, not legally anyway. Evergreen hiding under emotionless white. The smell I'll never forget. As if grapes could sweat, if flowers could defecate, if perfume could be made from skunk. CLAK...

"Faith, where are you going?" Roger wiped the sweat away just like he tries to wipe the years away.

"Nowhere, I guess."

Thinking that I'm talking about the here and now, he seemed confused when I kept walking.

"Faith? Faith! You've got to help your old man cut down this tree. I'm serious, you hear? Faith!"

Roger. Dad. Father. I don't care what Mom called him, what my little sister called him, or what his friends call him.

"Loser." I said under my breath. CLAK...

I smile into the winter chill. My stride is confident. Our family house has been on fire ever since I screamed my first breath. Roger was a man of his own spirit, never to be intertwined with others. It's why Mom died, and it's why I'm walking away. I'm leaving the burning house. My sister will too.

Unfortunately, we have Roger's same spirit. Only I will never burden others with it. Not with friends, not with marriage, not with children. And because of this prideful, arrogant and sleeping nature, he doesn't follow me.

Within ten minutes, I was standing out front of the house with a bag in my hand, waiting with Roger's money. I didn't really know the guy that was picking me up; he was just a guy from school that happened to be madly in love with me, who was willing to make this trip. It had cooled down, and a light powder came down from the sky. Dark before three.

It only took the guy a few minutes to get to my house, that's how bad he'd had it for me.

"Hi Boyd." I sighed as I got into the car. It was a little purple pick-up. He flashed me his 'It's alright because I'm here' smile. He wasn't exactly handsome, but I was okay with that.

"Where to, sweetcakes?" he asked me. I almost jumped out of the car, but then I saw something that would keep me going for the rest of my life.

As Boyd pulled the gear shift, I spotted my father leaning against our house. I didn't get a chance to look him in the eyes, but he knew I was not coming home this time. For some weird reason, for the first time since Mom died, I felt my tear ducts acting up. Something must have gotten into my eyes. Dad had a fallen tree behind him, axe slung over his shoulder.

And he waved.



UNTITLED 3 Norma Jean Montejano

